

JOHN RUSKIN'S
LETTERS TO FRANCESCA
AND
MEMOIRS OF THE ALEXANDERS

LUCIA GRAY SWETT



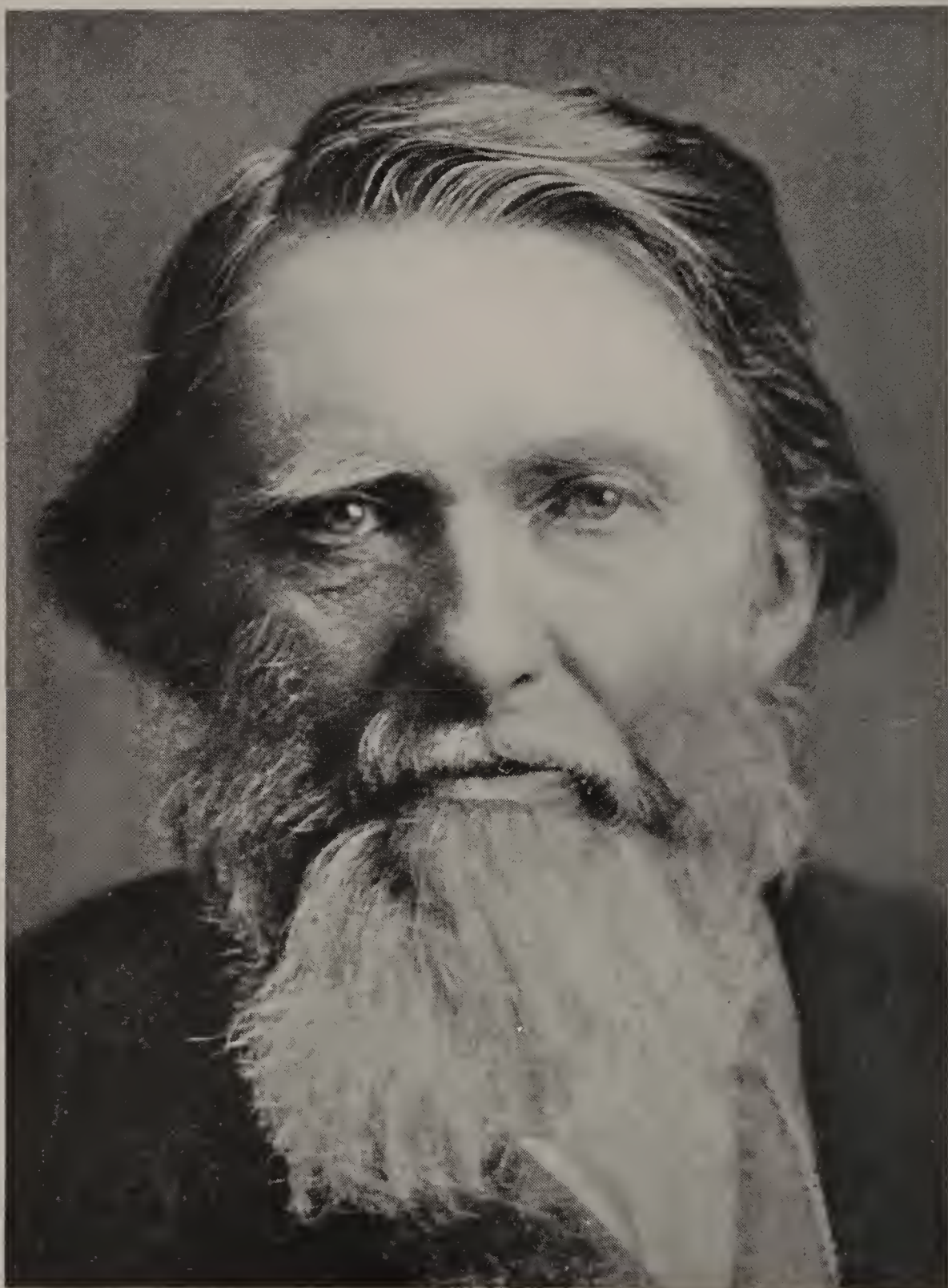
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John Ruskin's Letters to Francesca
and
Memoirs of the Alexanders



Ever your more than grateful,
and more than ever loving
J Ruskin

John Ruskin's
Letters to Francesca
and
Memoirs of the Alexanders

By
LUCIA GRAY SWETT *comp.*

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
WILLIAM CLYDE DE VANE, JR.,
OF YALE UNIVERSITY

✓ Illustrated from Drawings by
Francesca Alexander, and Paintings
by Francis Alexander, and from Photographs ✓



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JOHN RUSKIN'S LETTERS TO FRANCESCA
AND
MEMOIRS OF THE ALEXANDERS

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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OCT - 6 1931 ✓

4165716

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FOR their kindness in permitting the publication of some of the letters included in this volume, our most grateful thanks are tendered to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Dr. Theodore Jewett Eastman, Mrs. Joseph G. Thorp, Mr. Richard H. Dana, Mrs. Laurin Martin, Mr. Greenleaf Whittier Picard, Mr. P. T. Sherman, Dr. Robert Means Lawrence, Mrs. Charles B. Perkins, and Mr. Malcolm Donald.

We particularly wish to acknowledge the co-operation of our cousins, the Misses Charlotte and Emily Hallowell, in their contribution of the sketch of Sir Walter Scott, their share of the John Ruskin letters, and other valuable material.

To Professor William Clyde De Vane, Jr., especial appreciation is due for his kind interest and valuable suggestions.

LUCIA GRAY SWETT.

MARY C. SWETT.

INTRODUCTION

THE distance from Beacon Hill to Val d'Arno, or to Abetone in "the blue mountains behind Pistoia," is one hardly to be measured in miles. In the "fifties" of the last century, when the Alexanders left America for Florence in search of health for Mr. Alexander, assuredly Florence was as near as it ever had been to the Anglo-Saxon world. Willing and unwilling exiles from America and England, though hardly typical representatives of the lands they had left, continued to congregate in Florence and Rome, and later in Venice. Yet these exiles did not become Italian, or perhaps in most cases even Italianate. Milton, in his Italian travels of some two centuries earlier, was fond of inscribing an Horatian epigram in the registers of the places he visited,—an epigram which is compounded in part of national pride,—*Caelum, non animum, mutant qui trans mare currunt*. The Alexanders, as one may see from Francesca's vivid letters to America, succeeded rather better than most in identifying themselves with the life of their adopted country.

In the three decades of the Alexanders' residence in Italy before John Ruskin visited them in 1882, a very considerable number of eminent

men had come into their lives. The *Memoir* of Francesca is liberally strewn with such names as Frederick Tennyson, the elder brother of the Laureate; James Russell Lowell, who paid a visit to the Alexanders and wrote a sonnet to Francesca; John Greenleaf Whittier, whose letters make some of the brightest passages in the galaxy of the *Memoir*; and then, to make an end, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Richard H. Dana, Sir Frederick Leighton, Sarah Orne Jewett, Cardinal Manning, and General Sherman. But these are only a few of the great who came into the lives of the Alexanders. They met the King of Italy, and they met Garibaldi, the unacknowledged king; they were friends of numerous Italian nobles, and of Cardinals Agostini and Canossa. The comings and goings of these men and women are so charmingly revealed in the *Memoir* that they need not be dwelt upon here.

Yet none of these, loved as some of them were, made the impression upon the lives of Francesca and her mother that John Ruskin made when he visited them in Florence on the 8th of October, 1882. The distance from Ruskin's London to the hospitable home of the Alexanders in Florence is likewise one that is not to be measured in miles. The foreign tour which Ruskin began in August of 1882, and which was to restore happiness for a while to his life, was also taken in search of health.

In December of 1880 Ruskin had suffered his

second attack of brain-fever,—“terrific delirium” as he called it,—and it was not until March 24th that he was able to explain to his friend Charles Eliot Norton that he had taken “another bite or two of Nebuchadnezzar’s bitter grass.” On the 29th of March he wrote to Dr. John Brown, “Both these illnesses have been part of one and the same constant thought, far out of sight to the people about me, and, of course, getting more and more separated from me as *they* go on in the ways of the modern world, and *I* go *back* to live with my father and my mother and my nurse, and one more,—all waiting for me in the Land of the Leal.”

The year 1881 was disastrous. Carlyle, his old master, died on February 4th, and this brought to Ruskin a feeling of unutterable loneliness. Early in 1882 his delirium overwhelmed him again. After a long, slow convalescence he set out for the Alps and Italy with his friend Collingwood. Professor Norton gives us a vivid and touching picture of Ruskin as he appeared at this time:

“I had left him in 1873 a man in vigorous middle life, young for his years, erect in figure, alert in action, full of vitality, with smooth face and untired eyes. I found him an old man, with look even older than his years, with bent form, with the beard of a patriarch, with the habitual expression of weariness, with the general air and gait of age. But there were all the old affection and tenderness; the worn look readily gave way to the

old animation, the delightful smile quickly kindled into full warmth; occasionally the unconquerable youthfulness of temperament reasserted itself with entire control of manner and expression, and there were hours when the old gaiety of mood took possession of him with its irresistible charm."

Many causes had conspired to make Ruskin old before his time. Not the least of these was persistent overwork. There was no cure for that, for work itself was an escape from things which would have hurt him more. There was the tragedy of his life, his love for Rose La Touche. She had died in May 1875, after Ruskin had been living for eight years in a state of hope deferred. The touching confessions which he was later to make in his letters to Francesca show that time, which had wrought such havoc upon Ruskin, was at long last beginning to heal his wounds. He can find pleasure again in the recollection of Rose and his own sorrow. Even the bitterness towards Rose's parents has almost passed away. But the struggle had scored his spirit, and the victory was not lightly won.

Again, the dreadful events of May 1875 had darkened his religious faith and plunged him into a wayward spirit of rationalism and doubt. *The Bible of Amiens*, and his other writings as well, show him, after 1880, gradually winning his way to his final faith,—a simple understanding and submission to the ways of God, and a belief in the goodness of men. It was in this condition

of imperfect convalescence in body, heart, and spirit that John Ruskin entered Florence in October, 1882, and on the 8th of that month was introduced by his friend H. R. Newman, an American artist, to Francesca Alexander.

The perfectly integrated life, character, and art of Miss Alexander came to Ruskin as a revelation from Heaven. It was medicinal,—restorative. In Miss Alexander's charity, her faithful art, and in her pictures of the simple faith and good, happy lives of her Tuscan peasants, Ruskin saw all that he needed for his own health in spirit, mind and body. He saw there the history of "the innocent and invincible peasant life," "under all sorrow, the force of virtue; over all ruin, the restoring Charity of God." Her work meant to Ruskin not only a beautiful and expressive art, reminiscent to him of good things he had praised in the methods of the Pre-Raphaelites, but a vivid representation of the purposes of God.

Watts, the painter and fellow idealist of Ruskin, admired Miss Alexander's work, and said that he would rather have drawn the face of the *Madonnina* than almost any work that he had done. But surely the tribute she would most have appreciated came from Ruskin. On the 11th of October he wrote in his diary, "I never knew such vivid goodness and innocence in any living creatures as in this Mrs. and Miss Alexander."

The coming of this "very pleasant, elderly gentleman with a kind face and a fine voice and very simple friendly manners" had a sudden, humorous, and sometimes exasperating effect upon the quiet Alexander household. The *Memoir* has described admirably how Francesca became famous overnight, and how her drawing-room was overrun by curious visitors. The moral and artistic dictator of England had singled her out for praise, and thenceforth the simplicity of Francesca's world was in grave danger of being destroyed. But Francesca characteristically took the gold, which was Ruskin's friendship, and let the dross go its own way.

So with the discovery of Miss Alexander and her drawing, the recovery of his faith and his health, and the gradual healing of the old wounds of his heart which time was effecting, it is little wonder that the tour of 1882 was regarded by Ruskin as an immense success.

On his return to England in the next year he set about blazoning abroad in gratitude and enthusiasm his discovery of "the fine gold which has been strangely trusted to me, and which before was a treasure hid in a mountain field in Tuscany." At Oxford as Slade Professor of Fine Arts in 1883 he spoke of and exhibited Miss Alexander's book, *The Story of Ida*, which he had bought from her and obtained permission to print. On the 5th of June he gave a private lecture in London, mainly upon her work. Pro-

fessor Oliver Elton heard Ruskin's lectures at Oxford, and describes them admirably:

"I heard these addresses: the voice comes back to the mind's ear, with its singular wailing quality, which seemed to the young imagination like that of a wondering and saddened angel, full of quite woeful, open-eyed, inexpugnable *surprise* that the incorrigible world of men should be what it is, and yet never ashamed of itself."

In this same year Ruskin edited, with a preface by himself, Miss Alexander's book, *The Story of Ida*; in 1885 he published her *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*; and in 1887 *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*. He continued to encourage her, advise her, and care for her, as the letters between them show, until his overtaxed brain gave way entirely.

Yet one must not entertain the idea that this was a one-sided friendship. Ruskin was able to introduce her to his complex and mighty world, but through the seven years after their meeting he leaned upon the simple strength and faith of Francesca many times, renewing there his own strength and faith. The confidences he made concerning his Rose and their lost love, and the quick and ready sympathy he found, were both good for him. The reader will find in the following correspondence the history of the friendship of these two spirits, and how they helped each other. If one were inclined to inspect accounts between friends, as happily one is not, one might

observe, in these delightful letters, that John Ruskin is in spiritual debt to Francesca Alexander.

So Ruskin continued his busy and useful life until the shadows descended upon him in 1889. As long as he could write, he wrote to Francesca and her mother, and long after received letters from them. In 1888, as his illness approached again, he thought that another trip to Italy and Francesca would rejuvenate him as it had done six years before. He went to the Alexanders in Bassano, and again they were "among the kindest people in the world." But the old magic would not work, for his illness was too far advanced. In 1889 Ruskin retired to Brantwood and the eleven years' silence began.

WILLIAM CLYDE DE VANE.

*New Haven,
April 8, 1930.*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION BY WM. CLYDE DE VANE, JR. .	7

PART I

JOHN RUSKIN'S LETTERS TO FRANCESCA . .	21
--	----

PART II

INTRODUCTION TO PART II	207
MEMOIRS OF THE ALEXANDERS	211

ILLUSTRATIONS

John Ruskin	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Lucia Gray Swett (Mrs. Francis Alexander) .	32
Francesca Alexander	104
Madonna and Child	152
Francis Alexander . .	<i>Frontispiece to Part II</i>
Sir Walter Scott	212
Francesca When a Child	216
Eliza Tennyson	236
A Contadina at the Well	268
A Contadina and Her Child	284
Hall of the Palazzo Rezzonico at Bassano in the Veneto	314
Cardinal Canossa	340
A Little Italian Friend	390

PART I

JOHN RUSKIN'S LETTERS

John Ruskin's Letters to Francesca

IN her letters Francesca Alexander tells the story of her friendship with John Ruskin and what it meant to her and to her work. To Mr. Ruskin, his friendship with the Alexanders meant the restoration of his religious faith lost long before. After his first meeting with them, he wrote in his diary, "I never knew such vivid goodness and innocence in any living creatures, as in this Mrs. and Miss Alexander."¹ Mr. Ruskin was extremely fond of Mrs. Alexander, whom he called his "*Mamma*," and was much influenced by her. In a letter dated December 22, 1886, he writes, "I have taken you so faithfully and truly for *Mamma* that I would never do anything you forbade, any more than I would against my dead Mother's will."

The following letters do not form a complete correspondence, as only a limited number of Francesca's letters were available, and a great many of Mr. Ruskin's letters were destroyed in Florence. We have, however, a sufficient number to form the record of a very beautiful friendship and we feel that this record should be preserved.

¹ *The Life of John Ruskin*, E. T. Cook, Vol. II, page 464.

Mr. Ruskin's first letter is in reference to his purchase of Francesca's large book, *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, which she considered the chief work of her life. An edition of this was published in England under the original title; a much more beautiful edition was published in America under the title of *Tuscan Songs*.

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Florence, October 9th, 1882.

Dear Mrs. Alexander:

I’ve taken a new pen—it is all I can!—I wish I could learn an entirely new writing from some pretty hem of an angel’s robe, to tell you with what happy and *reverent* admiration I saw your daughter’s drawings yesterday;—reverent, not only of a quite heavenly gift of genius in a kind I had never before seen,—but also of the entirely sweet and loving spirit which animated and sanctified the work, and the serenity which it expressed in the surest faiths and best purposes of life.

(It thunders as I write, as if all the fiends of the air were trying to hinder me from saying what is in my heart.)

In absolute skill of drawing, and perception of all that is loveliest in human creatures—and in the flowers that live for them—I think these works are in their kind unrivalled, and that they do indeed represent certain elements of feeling and power peculiar to this age in which we are entering on new dispensations of thought and

hope; good for *me* to see especially, because I have hitherto been brought into collision with all its evil, and have been much cast out from the knowledge of its good.

The earlier thunder of the morning kept me awake to some good purpose, for it gave me time to think over all these things in their relation to my work in England; and I came to the conclusion that I might, for the service of our English peasantry, be mean enough to take Miss Alexander at her frank word as to the price of the book. I will give six hundred guineas for it, with more than pleasure, if at that price I may be permitted to place it in the St. George's Museum, but in order to insure its perfect usefulness there, I am going to pray Miss Alexander to write—by way of introduction to it—such brief sketches as she may find easy of arrangement of the real people whose portraits are given. What you and she told me in the little time of looking over it would be almost enough; but one of my chief objects in obtaining the book will be the conveying to the mind of our English peasantry (not to say princes) some sympathetic conception of the reality of the sweet soul of Catholic Italy.

I am going to ask Mr. Newman ¹ to intercede with you and with Miss Alexander for me in all

¹ Mr. Henry R. Newman, an American artist who lived for many years in Italy. Mr. Ruskin was an enthusiastic admirer of Mr. Newman's water colors, and several of his paintings hung in Mr. Ruskin's home.

these matters—one more—quite personal favour—I scarcely like to ask but yet will venture—that I might see Miss Alexander draw a little bit of a flower. I have really no conception how that work can be done, and am the more personally interested in it, because it is the glorification and perfection of a method once recommended in my elements of drawing—and afterwards rejected as too difficult.

If this might be, or indeed whether it may be or not!—I trust to be permitted to wait upon you both once more—before leaving Florence. Mr. Newman will tell me your pleasure and your time; and so I remain, my dear Mrs. (and Miss) Alexander, your grateful and faithful servant,
John Ruskin.”

“Herne Hill,
December 9th, 1882.

Dear Mrs. Alexander:

I have never felt the least cheerful since I left Florence, and I think you would be sorry for me—so sorry that it would be a shame to tell you—if you knew how woeful I am today in the fog and cold and far-away separateness from St. Maria Novella.

But I got home safe from harm in travelling, and lectured last Monday once more; and I have put my little room in order and I am set quietly to my routine work again till Christmas; but one piece of work will be quite other than routine.

I brought Fanny's story of Ida home in my own desk, and now I am watching over the copying of it out for the printer and it will be done to-morrow or the day after, and then I shall write my little preface to it, and have all ready to go to press the moment after the Christmas holidays are over. On Tuesday, I am going to take the drawing of the last sunset to be photographed—and to consult upon with an engraver. I hope to get it engraved, in some degree worthily, for the frontispiece. I could do nothing in this last week, I was tired and sad, but the reaction is, I hope, now to come, and all the good of your kindness to me will tell otherwise than in despondencies.

The pretty books are all safe beside me, except the large one which I will *come* for; it is better not to risk its arrest.

The drawings of Ida are—I need not say—admired, and with amazement, by all to whom I allow sight of them. But I am jealous of showing them and perhaps may finally print the little book without the picture. It is like a trespass on her peace to show it—and yet—and yet . . . !”

“London, S. E.

Christmas 1882. Evening.

Dear Mrs. Alexander:

There is no one like you—no one—among all my friends, and I have many—and many sweet ones, and some who love me very much, but

I have never yet known anything like the flowing river of kindness, deep and soft and swift all at once, that you have unsealed for me. Your letter of a few days since was quite the most beautiful I have ever received, and today—just as you had wished and planned—came the precious card and letter (it's most precious of all) and the exquisite missal leaves and the orange blossoms. It had travelled perfectly. All the sprays of it were beautiful. Only a few leaves had fallen, which strewed the chambers with sweetness. And the white queen of the Alps—and the messages from friends—and Fanny's friends—how many they must be!—and Fanny's own love to add to them.

And all that I can do is to keep my last good-night on this Christmas of my sixty-third year for you—and to tell you that your daughter and you have made it a brighter day to me than it ever was, but one, before—and not only brighter but more deeply felt and understood. You have interpreted more of Christianity to me than I had learned of all my teachers, even of the hills and sky.

I cannot write more tonight—except only that I determined, on the permission implied in your last letter, to have the drawing of Ida engraved and it was undertaken by one of our best engravers in line, with true admiration of it. It was put into his hands as soon as I received his letter and will be ready, I hope, for Easter. . . .

John Ruskin."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Herne Hill,
Sunday, May 13th, 1883.

Darling Francesca:

I have opened your book ¹ today in my old nursery, where I found it—waiting for me.

I have no words to tell you how precious it is to me; but if I am spared in strength to complete my work in Oxford this Spring, you will soon know how precious it is to become to uncountable multitudes. The songs will not be forgotten nor will these Italians pass away. They will not all be taken to Heaven—yet. Their song shall still be heard in the springtime of their native land.

Of course—as a *book*, in its present form—it cannot and must not be seen. How you could ever manage to show it safely in your own room, I cannot think—but suppose Heaven took care of it—I must not tempt the protection, but shall instantly order frames for the main drawings and cabinets for the whole, out of which separate pages may be shown on different days. The story of *Ida* will be out just after the Whitsun Holidays, and after it has begun to be read, I shall make this book known at Oxford.

Your lovely account of the peasants is safe also here, by good Miss Lloyd's care, and I am for the present too much bewildered by the

¹ *Roadside Songs of Tuscany.*

beauty of it all to write more than that I am ever
your Mother's and your

devoted Servant and *Figlio* and *Fratello*,

J. Ruskin.

I will write Mamma about the other things
directly, but can't today, my head's so full of
this, and my heart."

"Herne Hill,
June 1st, 1883.

Darling Francesca:

I have got the Oxford lectures done; and
the impression made by the sight of your draw-
ings there has been both deep and universal—
but it is only begun; and I am now writing some
more intimate expression of my feeling about
them, to be read next week—Tuesday, to my own
personal friends in London.

I could not say in Oxford the half of what I
did feel—nor can I rightly or enough say it, even
to my friends, but I hope what little I can say
will be enough when I have your beautiful pieces
of history to read with it,—especially that of
Beatrice—supplementing the preface, and I am
certain that your mother and you both will re-
joice in hearing of the good—beyond all that you
could hope or conceive—which this book will do,
to the best and wisest.

I get the loveliest letters about Ida, and will
soon gather together some of them, and give you
account of sayings and praisings and thankings.

This poor note is only to thank you especially for your last letter, and to say how much my mind is relieved by knowing that you are pleased with the book of Ida.

Of course, whatever profits come of it belong to you,—or belong to Ida, as you will,—you know me better than to think I would keep any portion of them myself—that *va sans dire*—yet it is time to say it ——

All kinds of love—and measures of it—to that dear Mother of yours.

Ever your devoted *Fratello* (is there such a word?).

And of course the drawings. You little goose, to think they could be kept or shown gummed back to back!

4th June. The reason Mamma's message was never answered was that before leaving Brantwood I had two guests in the house, and the sick child of one—and nobody to help me—and all arrangements at Oxford to make—and my own mind to keep in order, and I put Mamma's letter by, to be read when your closing benediction, '*Restate in Pace*,' should be possible.

Tomorrow I lecture to my own friends only, in the drawing-room of a very precious one. Nearly everybody who cares for me much is coming—old and young—the one *I* care for most is Mr. George Ridmond's grandchild, Iona, and she, I believe, of all there, will most care for the

part of the lecture ¹ which will be best—the reading of the stories of Beatrice, Angelo, Isabella, Paolina, Lucia, and Edwige, out of your white and red book. Do you know, I never took that out of its cover till the day before yesterday!—how can I thank you for it all?

Dearest love to *la Madre*.

Ever your poor *Frate*

J. R.”

“University Galleries, Oxford,
June 10th, 1883.

Darling *Sorella*:

I’ve been so excited with dwelling among your hill-folk, and talking of them, that I find myself—(the main work done, now) a little cast down, and sick for Italy—yet doing more good here than I could there.

I lectured on your book last Tuesday to all my best London friends and made them ever so happy, and now photographs are being made of the best (I mean, the principal) pages, and I hope soon to send you some results. Today I’m writing only to thank Mamma for a marvellous

¹ An account of this lecture was published in the *London Spectator* of June 9th, 1883. Mr. Ruskin began his lecture by saying, “I have never until today dared to call my friends and my neighbors together to rejoice with me over any recovered good or rekindled hope. Both in fear and much thankfulness, I have done so now; yet not to tell you of any poor little piece of ungathered silver of my own, but to show you the fine gold which has been strangely trusted to me, and which before was a treasure hid in a mountain field of Tuscany; and I am not worthy to bring it to you, and I can’t say what I feel about it, and am only going to tell you simply what it is and how it came into my hands, and to leave you to have your joy of it.”

Hebrew scroll—marvellous and inestimable—but how *can* I stop her from this oppression of my free-hearted affection for her and you. Please *make* her stop now, for I don't know what to do.

But the thing chiefly on my *mind* is what *you* should do now with that glorious power. I notice that you are always strongest in the most difficult subjects and that in landscape you are still comparatively feeble unless it be a background to Isabella or St. Christopher.

I wish you would choose a rocky bit of near landscape, with just a child at a spring, or a woman carrying wood, or the like, for motive of interest—and draw it as you have done the Samaritana well—I want something for Oxford, to show what the abstract loveliness of rock and foliage is, and except an old study of my own in lampblack, I've nothing that is not conventional and incomplete.

Also, a little practice in pure landscape would be restful for you, and in some points of *chiaroscuro*—good for you.

Dearest and many and many loves to Mamma.

Ever your loving *Frate*.

—I've just been reading over again your letter about Ida, and of my doing so much for you. My dear, I do nothing for you—except love and honour you very much; it is you who do all for me—and I said simply to the London people that I was not worthy to have such a book to show



LUCIA GRAY SWETT
(*Mrs. Francis Alexander*)

them. But it is nice that you like so much what I've said about the two religions."

From Mr. Ruskin's first meeting with Mrs. Alexander and Francesca, he seemed charmed and fascinated with them. Very soon he had such an affectionate friendship for them that he called Aunt Lucia his *Mamma* and Francesca his *Sorella*. In the letter following, he reproaches Francesca for calling him Mr. Ruskin, and in all her subsequent letters she addresses him as *Mio Caro Fratello*.

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

"Brantwood, June 22nd, 1883.

Darling *Mamma*:

No—I *never will* mind what that *Sorella* says any more—she calls me Mr. Ruskin!—and she frightened me quite dreadfully about you: all the same, tell her she's to keep the Cardinal's letter, of course—and I shall have some other pretty ones to send her soon, and say that I'm so delighted she's going to do some landscape, but that I must have the *Madonnina* in the corner of it, or Paolina—or part of Lucia if she's to be found easier. Only I'm afraid of the landscape (as such) giving her too much trouble, and she must be very sure that the entire field of the subject taken in by her paper is pretty, so as not to lose labour on uninteresting forms.

I think she has not yet quite done justice to Italian distances. I think a bit of Lucca would have been pretty behind Santa Zita,¹ and the

¹ Santa Zita, called the Protectress of Lucca. Plate LXVII, *Tuscan Songs*.

view from her window which ends the preface is the only bit of interesting Italian building which she has given. It seems to me that her strength might be put, sometimes, on a piece of beautiful old architecture for a background, with great advantage.

I don't know what is to happen to me this year yet. Be sure how much I want to come to that little room. But my own work almost always determines the place I must be in.

The lovely Hebrew Bible is behind me in my bookcase. I could not write of it before, for it was delayed at Euston house till I had gone to Oxford. It is enough to make me learn Hebrew in my old age. But the scroll is lovelier still”

To Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston,
Sunday, July 14th, 1883.

Darling Mammie:

I have your lovely long letter and exquisite short one; and am so very thankful and happy about all. Today's account of the reading in the fir-grove! and—at Venice—the gondoliers at St. George!!—and all else. Please, I want you or Francesca—you most—to translate that number of St. Mark's Rest into Italian, and I'll print it and give to Signor Boni for distribution at Venice.

And please tell me the story about silver Bible. And please send my love and congratulations to Mr. Newman on his marriage, and scold him for not having told me about it, and say that I never can write because I've so much to say—and send my love to Alessandro.

I will do—*not* do, I mean—all you tell me, for you are entirely wise and right, as far as possible. I cannot rest wholly—I get morbid and ill if I try to, and I am really well at present in carefully ordered work—of which I'll tell you more soon. But the photographs must be got done, *now*, D. V.

Tell Francesca I would send her some counsel about her landscape if I dared interfere with the inspiration in her. Edwige's advice (not to try to do as well as the good God) is also much to be taken to heart.

Ever your lovingest *figlio*,

J. R.

I shall be so very thankful to you for translating the Shrine."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston,
July 31st, 1883.

Darling *Sorella*:

You're no end of a sweet, to know that I wasn't changed, any more than you. It's Mamma who makes mistakes now—I only didn't

send you any messages to tease you—I got the letter all right from Venice, and I should have written a lot before now, if I could really have helped you or told you of definite faults—but your only fault is not being quite yourself—you never come out completely except in the grandest subjects.

There are faults, certainly, in the bits of landscape, but they lie chiefly in not choosing a subject pretty enough; and also you never study complete light and shade, with the lights small and the shadows broad; but this is not a style adapted for pen and ink. I must see this new landscape before I can say anything.

Dearest love to Mamma—I'll write to her tomorrow, but please tell her I never got Mr. Newman's letter announcing the marriage.

The photographs are coming beautifully—far more successfully than I hoped—the Parlami bocca d'amore¹ has come quite marvellously. The enclosed is one of the poorest, but will show you the size they're to be.

Ever your loving *fratello*,
J. Ruskin."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
August 15th, 1883.

Darling *Sorella*:

I've been wanting to say so much about your drawings that are to be, and I'm always

¹ *The Soldier's Love*. Plate XXXIII, *Tuscan Songs*.

afraid of frightening or urging, or suggesting or confusing you, but this one thing I must say. Don't engage yourself with the *Century* or any other magazine. They will merely treat you as a gold quartz and crush you and sift you and sell you. Don't do anything for them—but draw whatever it comes into your soul to draw—and send the drawings regularly to me, while I'm in town this winter,—let me price them for you—and if I don't do it better for you than the *Century* is like to do, you can go to it afterwards.

I'm trying prints for the quarto text to go with the photographs and getting sets ready as fast as I can.

Dearest love to Mamma.

Ever your faithful *fratello*,

J. R."

“Brantwood, Coniston,
August 25th, 1883.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I am so very thankful for your lovely note, chiefly for that part of it which you could not go on writing. And I do think and trust that you will be happy in having me say things to you; happiest I in always having them said to me, and I'll take the little rock hollow for seal and symbol of this seclusion of ours.

The Isabella,¹ with her complete landscape, is the grandest piece of drawing, next to the Samaritan,² in the book. And I think you should never take commissions for vignetted subjects unless very small, as in an illuminated letter. I wonder whether some day it will come to you to do the Magdalene telling the disciples that she had seen the Lord! When next you go to Venice, I want you to fetch out somehow at S. Francesco *in deserto*, and draw St. Francis preaching to the birds with the distance he saw, and the birds that really came—mostly sea-gulls, I fancy.

Dear love to Mamma.

Ever your lovingest *Fratello*."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
September 18th, 1883.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I should like to be writing to you all day, but have been obliged to drop pen the instant my own work was done, lately, and your lovely last letter could only be cherished, not answered.

This one, with the exquisitely happy story of

¹ The drawing of Isabella which Mr. Ruskin admires so much is Plate XCI of *Tuscan Songs*. The following is the translation of the little *rispetto* which accompanies this drawing:

On Monday to a flower I do compare my love;
On Tuesday to a rose new blown;
On Wednesday to a lily tall and fair;
On Thursday to a rare and precious stone;
On Friday she's like sunshine in the air;
On Saturday her beauty stands alone,
And when on Sunday in her face I gaze
She's fairer then than all the other days.

² La Samaritana is Plate LII of *Tuscan Songs*.

Whittier's letter and sonnet, must be answered the morning it reached me. They are more helpful to me than you can conceive, for I am so dead-hearted just now in many ways and yet so active-handed, that any such words from a good man are water of life. But of the business in America I am not able to judge in the least. Only, as I wrote before, don't engage to do anything yourself. Of course find copyright as far as possible. I am getting the photographs done as fast as I can, but we want a certain number to start with and it has not been possible for me yet to determine how much of the legends are to go with them. I will soon let you know now.

Ever your lovingest *Fratello*, with all sorts of love and duty to *la nostra Mammina*.

J. R."

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

"Kenniwe Castle, Galloway,
October 1st, 1883.

Sweetest Mammie:

I've just got your letter and *Sorella's*, comforting me in all manner of ways, and full of sense and good counsel—only—you don't quite think enough of the people who want me here—of whom some are, I hope, being taught how to take up my work when I must leave it—and indeed, though sometimes sad (and then I write to you for comfort), I am in many ways

happy, just now, and as you could wish me to be, if you knew all. I can't write much today,—but first tell Sorella how deeply I felt Edwige's beginning to sing again—and that her landscape is done, and that her book is never *work* to me, but always help and life, and next—I am so glad the pansies came to you still coloured. The one you sent seal of is my favourite dark one which grows close under the house; the little one is our true wild pansy—Viola Psyche, Ophelia's pansy of Proserpina. I had only one flower of it this year on all my ground, and that I sent you: but I know a cluster of it five miles down the lake, and will plant some, next year, where I think they will be happy, on my bit of moor.

I hope to get home on the 3rd and then I shall have delightful times with Sorella's book¹—I've got type settled, and my own notions a little—but I'm a profane creature to have charge of such a thing. There's a French play where a quite naughty Papa has an angel of a daughter come home to him from her convent—and he doesn't in the least know how to behave! I feel so like him.

Dear love to *Sorella*, and some of it to Edwige, and I'm ever your lovingest *Figlio*,

J. R.

Whittier's lines are exquisite—
But he must have been so good! and me's bad."

¹ *The Roadside Songs of Tuscany.*

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Lancashire,
October 13th, 1883.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

How delightful it is to have you within reach again, instead of thinking one's letters are to lie for a month in a bank, and then be a month more wandering in the mountains. I got yours about the landscape the day before yesterday, and now, with my heart in my mountains, I'm going to give you some advice. You felt that you missed the *grace* of the trees, though you *never* miss grace of expressional action. Your hands and feet are inexpressibly right and your stiffness even lovely in its severity. I send you a little present of photos from Turner. Don't try to like them. They express primarily his intense melancholy, coming of want of religious faith (as all chiaroscuro work essentially does). But he loves *light* as much as you do. And these studies are to ascertain first before he worked for light what the shadows of the world were.

I send you with them an old engraving of the fall, which is in your own terms of light and Turner's translation of it into shade. I am certain he saw the print and meant to show what the *other* side of things was.

I want you to see and know this other side, and then to keep to your own, but chiefly to draw some trees, now and then, in Turner's way—

mere outline of them, and branches for the sake of their curves, filled in with sepia as fast as it can be blotted on, then the lights taken out where they should appear.

I'm just leaving for Oxford and can't write more. If these things frighten you and sadden you, send me them back, and I'll send you a different kind of thing.

Dear love to that blessed Mammie, and much to Edwige.

Ever your lovingest *Fratello*,
J. R."

"London,
October 23rd, 1883.

Darling *Sorella*:

I have two delicious notes of yours to return thanks for, besides all the enquiries for my lost one. I suppose I never wrote it on paper, and it was only written in my heart. I know it had a great many things in it I particularly wanted Mamma to read.

And I shall like to have the Lucca coin with this Volte Santo—and I daresay I shall like the cyclamens when they grow—if they do; but the things I want to always won't.

But I am so very very glad you like the Turner. There are three kinds: I. Photographs of the etchings by his own hand made on the plates before the mezzotint was put over the surface; II. Photographs of various sepia sketches

and water drawings by Turner; III. One or two impressions of the real plates of *Liber Studiorum*.

I have not robbed myself or my walls of anything. All these are store duplicates, kept to be given where they will be useful.

Don't for an instant think of altering your style, or way, of seeing things close to you.

The portrait of Isabella is simply perfect—head, landscape, and all—but in your own style you may do more interesting things than the avenue background of Sta. Zita and you may greatly gain in general power of graceful composition by sketching sometimes in the Liber manner, and forcing yourself to be content with an outline, and a sepia wash more or less deep.

I should like you also to make pencil notes of real skies, when beautiful, outlining the clouds rapidly, and writing their colours, and you should copy some Lippi or Botticelli flowers and leaves, in order to feel the force of rightly conventional grace, in due measure. I don't want you to conventionalize either the grass on my torrent-brooks or the weeds by the Samaritan's well—but drawing the old ornamental forms will make you *see* beautiful things that you would otherwise have missed, and enable you more certainly to grasp those you see.

Conceive, for I cannot write, the pleasure I had in all you told me of Ida in America—and give all the love you can carry in your two eyes

to Mamma. And give my true thanks to Edwige, and love me yourself all you can, and I'm ever your lovingest *Fratello*,

J. R.

Far away you don't get enough—feel the mysteries and influences of things—hence you are puzzled by distant hills."

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston,
December 9th, 1883.

Sweetest Mammie:

How dreadfully difficult you make it for me not to open the box the moment it comes. What can be in it? I feel like Bassanio without a key!

But I want to write you chiefly about that Fan of ours. It seems to me she's frittering herself away and doing everything that everybody asks her—and I think she should make up her mind that as a rule whenever anybody asked her to do a thing—whatever she did she wouldn't do *that*,—and I'm afraid she's selling her drawings for half or a quarter of their value and being made a prey, and savoury morsel, and marrow bone of, by the wolfy multitude, and I want you to get hold of any drawing you like and send it to me here, with her price upon it, and let *me* judge.

I'm quite well, as I said, and as the Doctor says—still colded a little, and of course at a dis-

advantage in not getting out; but I'm doing useful work, and clearly, to my own mind, in my duty here in the *winter*—to *you* I must come in summer days, being

Ever your dutiful and grateful

Figlio.

I'm quite well, really. Only a little sneezy and creaky."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
January 31st, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I have your last lovely letter about Suora Marrianna and *Mamma*'s following, and I'm packing up to go to town on Monday and give a lecture on Clouds, and my head's full of nothing but clouds, and the sky outside's made of them—raining fast—and I do hope I shall get your American couple with the Rispetti packed and sent.

But you *are* such a little goose, Francie, to think there's any trouble to me in this, or in editing your stories, or in doing anything I can possibly do for you. It is an entirely new and powerful stimulus given to my life, and it helps me in all possible ways.

But mind you have a good rest. Dearest love to *Mamma*.

Ever your devoted

Fratello."

“Herne Hill,
February 25th.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

Tomorrow — and tomorrow! — You can never trust me unless I use my own motto. Today.

The stories have been safe here for a week—they are glorious and I'm wild about them—but forced to be externally tame, till I've done my cloud-lecture printing.

Write here, to say if you can, soon. I leave for Brantwood about 5th March, D. V.

Ever your lovingest

Fratello.”

“February 26th, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I just got yours of the 22nd last night, after mine was gone.

How *can* you let people tease or shake you. I am shaken by my own faults or by the cruelties of the Fates, but never by fool's talk! Tell them *sternly*, to hold their peace—it needs the sorrow of a life to learn the things they mock at—the Strength of a noble Life, to do them.

Follow your own heart's instincts serenely, and attend only to the words of the poor. Every hour of my life I see the curse of 'Money' more distinctly.

(N. B. I've just given £1000 for a diamond—pure natural crystal, untouched by tool,—129

carats weight.—This size and form. It is lent to British Museum and to be called St. George's Diamond.)

I hope to give your answer about the main question of miracle in the preface to Sta. Zita, and more for St. Christopher.¹

Ever your lovingest—gratefullest

Fratello.”

“March 15th, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I answer on the instant the part of your lovely letter about the harm of what people say. That is the only way the Evil Spirits can get *at* you, and you really must not let them come in at the door opened by your *fratello*.

There is really nothing for it but the true, rational, useful-needful, indispensably cruel convent grate. You must live the Angelico and St. Francis life—in peace. You must simply let it be known that you need quiet, not praise; and close your door steadily against the Rich. As for selling either drawings or photographs—put it wholly out of your head. Do what you delight in doing, and let me and the people I can trust see to the selling.

I think it would be well for you, till I can appoint an agent for everything, absolutely to decline sale, or talk of it.

¹ *Tuscan Songs*. Plates XXXVI, XXXVIII, XL, XLII, XLIV, XLVI.

Dearest love to Mamma. Your devoted
Fratello.

Send me the *Suora* addressed to *Brantwood* as soon as you can, and never vex yourself about failure. How much more blessed to feel it, than to be happy in all we do, and wrong! ”

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
 March 17th, 1884.

Darling *Sorella*:

I got home today at quarter past six from Hereford, where I had spent Sunday, and found your delicious letter with all its lovely and pensive talk to welcome me. How thankful I am that the cloud has passed and that you are happy and relieved by my undertaking the business part of your work. I have been thinking over it at my quiet tea and I think the prettiest way will be to have a little exhibition always of your year's work opened on the first of May in connection with the crowning of the Queen of May at Whiteland's College. I will always have a little catalogue prepared beforehand, and all London will come to see it,—all, I mean, that are worth a wish that they should come.

This year I will show the principal drawings of our book—with any you may be able to send me by the time, and I will fix the prices myself and hope to do better for your poor than the chance travellers in Florence.

The story of the little child is very wonderful, and to me most precious. Also that of the two bees!¹ And the little pencil beginning is a delightful gift.

I am very thankful to get home after town work, (and play, which is much the worse for me). Here in my history or science, I can forget how old I am. Dearest love to la Mama.

Ever your devoted

Fratello.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
March 20th, 1884.

Darling *Mamma*:

That I should write to bother you with enclosed rubbish!—but Joan² says I am to, and I’m the obedientest creature.

I’ve not been writing to you lately because I’ve been very melancholy, and naughty—and cross—and topsy turvy,—nothing does me so much good as any thought of F’s book, and I hope I shall do my part in it rightly—well or ill.

I’ve been a great deal petted in London this year, and I want to be younger—and to marry the prettiest of the pretty ones, and in fact I’m as like Faust as ever I can be! (Only please

¹ *Christ’s Folk in the Apennine.*

² Mrs. Arthur Severn, Mr. Ruskin’s cousin, who lived at Brantwood.

don't tell la Sorella,—but one must confess to one's Mammina when one's naughty.)

I believe I'm pretty well, really.

Ever your loving

Figlio."

The following are extracts from a letter to Francesca by Miss Sara Anderson, Mr. Ruskin's secretary, in which she refers to one of the lectures he gave in London on Francēska's work and exhibited some of her drawings.

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
Monday.

Dear Miss Alexander:

. . . The Princess of Wales came up to him with the sweetest smiles and was so quietly dressed, and Lady Gordon helped him in the talking department. Dozens of people came up to shake hands. The Duchess of Buccleugh came up to him with many questions.

You would like to hear that Mr. Ruskin looks very well and I think is so. But one can't help noticing sorrowfully how things oppress him now, and how he steps cautiously down places where he would once have jumped. Forgive my adding a little bit of my own. I feel as if I knew you. I have heard and copied so many of your letters and beautiful stories, and never a day passes that we don't mention 'Francesca.'

I am so thankful that you have come to Mr. Ruskin when so much else had gone. Like many other people in England, I am always

Gratefully yours,

Sara D. Anderson.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
April 1st, 1884.

Sweetest *Mamma*:

No, I've no other *Mamma*, no other *Sorella*, and it is ever so much more than I deserve to have such a two. It is true that I am not well just now, being both colded and tormented by dark weather, and by calculations of what I can't do . . . and of what I've too little chance of doing if I tried. But what I wrote of my usual state of mind has been so ever since 1875. I suppose that through it all I had far more and higher pleasures than most men, or, in some ways, than any man that I know.

The pleasure of seeing Francesca's pictures and editing her book is immense to me, for instance, and the pleasure of anything like natural sweet sunshine and that of variously pleasing or helping people.

Now, so many loving thanks for all the pretty things from Cyprus and Mexico, and the Montezuma relics will be very precious. And dearest love to our *Sorella*, and I'm so glad people come

to see the *Suora*, and *please* write me all they say, and I'm your devotedest *figlio*,

J. R."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
April 24th, 1884.

You precious *Sorella*:

This is such a blessed letter and so full, overflowing with deep under-runings of sweet things. I do so like Edwige and the widow's taking to prayers about it, and that people like it at Florence, and Beatrice's fur jacket, and you being taken for Botticelli! (My stars!) And above all that majestic story of your old clergyman's going home. But tell me exactly what happened, with detail.

The American lady may have the drawing if she sends you forty guineas for it—not under. The single heads, I think, should be seven guineas, ten, and fifteen.

I am very well just now chiefly, thanks, I know, to *Mamma* and you, and I should *think*, to Edwige and the widow. And I'm ever your *happy*

Fratello."

“Herne Hill, S. E.,
April 28th, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I'm so very glad *Mamma* saw those things before I did—I'm so frightened always lest I should hurt *her* by finding fault with you—I don't mind *you* a bit!

Now look here:—you want more rest than you know—you have had much taken out of you by the increased anxiety and excitement,—and no promises, little or big, ought to stand in the way of your getting it *instantly*. The drawings you make by way of fulfilling them *won't* and can't fulfill them, for they won't be as good as your average work. Tell *Mamma* to order you to stop, and then you must, you know, and get to Bassano as soon as ever you can.

When there, write that story, by all means,—but I won't have you publishing or published by anybody but me. I can't have you made cheap, nor dragged at by the curs of the trade—peace or not.

Now don't ask such a thing ever again—there. I'll publish whatever you write when it's good, and I won't have it published when it's bad.

I'm sending off (—it's the 27th, not 28th Sunday) all but the last two pages, 11th and 12th of my notes on *La Zita*, to introduce the story to the printer by this afternoon's post. Joanie (that's Mrs. Severn, you know) has copied them out, and I'll send *Mamma* the *MS.*, with the first

clear proof—and Joanie says they're very nice and I think so myself!—and I'm revising the print of the story in both Italian and English—it looks and reads ever so nice! and when I've got it all as right as I can, I must ask you to look over the Italian copy finally yourself, to see that it's all right.

I've just had—it is strange to say so, but it was,—a *happy* day at Claremont; the Duchess¹ asked me to come to be presented to her mother, and I came up from Brantwood to be of any good I could to her. I found her quite composed in the feeling that her husband was not really lost;—and even happy in her mother's presence—the mother being an extremely clever, cheerful and 'motherly' woman. I was able to do the Duchess a really good piece of service. The parish church people had asked leave to put up a stone to the Duke. She didn't like the inscription, and asked me to retouch it. She sent it to me in the evening and I re-wrote it entirely before breakfast and took it down to her and she said, 'I like it so much!' And I did a pretty little vignette for her of the view from her (own) windows (—her room opening from the Duke's study)—and she gave me the Duke's book-cutter, which he had used for the last five years, and a little book-marker of her own drawing—and I came away very proud and glad. Then I went to the private view of the Water-colour Society,

¹ The Duchess of Albany.

where I had three of my own drawings, (one chromo of the main pier of Lucca)—as long each as this note paper, and a good bunch of them—and a third of a single violet against dead leaves under a mossy stone.

I'm rather naughty, in not sending you the papers lately, for there's been a good deal of me and about me—but I'll get them for you yet. To-morrow I'm going to have tea with Miss —— and to read her your description of the post-mistress. She's sure to draw her.

Now lastly about the painting: It may be that you will find you have a power in that, greater than you at all know—but mind, don't fight with the difficulties of colour and light and shade at the same time. Draw your pen and ink things with more reference to *chiaroscuro*—but in colour—keep your present system of looking only for forms in light. I mean—paint a child with her yellow hair or black hair—her blue eyes or brown—paint the hills of their purple and the grass of its green—but keep all in bright light like a painted window, and try to paint fast and at once, not to ripple a finish. If you *can* go to Venice to look at Carpanio a little, he is a perfect model.

But use your colour, not for the sake of the drawing but for memory of the facts only, and never sell a coloured drawing, nor add a touch to it unless you exactly know what it wants. Your colour work must be kept for play. If you

enjoy carrying a drawing on, do; but never do for the sake of finishing, nor against the grain.

Use opaque body colour as much as possible—you can draw forms and patterns so much better with it. Never mind the drawing's looking chalky—if it's not muddy and opaque—if it is bright.

Here's my hot water coming, and I've no room for half the love I wanted to send Mammina. I must write another letter all to herself.

Ever your lovingest

Fratello."

Mr. W. S. Collingwood, in *The Life and Letters of John Ruskin*, calls Prince Leopold "the gentle Prince" and writes of Mr. Ruskin's affection for him: "A sincere friendship was formed, lasting until the Prince's death, which nobody lamented more bitterly than the man who had found so much in him and hoped so much from him."

Claremont, where Mr. Ruskin often visited, was given to Prince Leopold by Queen Victoria as a wedding present. The old Palace could tell an interesting story. It was built by Lord Clyde and has given shelter to a number of royalties and noted families, among these Louis Philippe of France and the families of Esher and Powis.

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
May 22nd, 1884.

Darling *Sorella*:

The long sweet letter and corrected song arrived at breakfast this morning, in a quite

cloudless sunshine—and curiously, just as I am planning the end of my English Art lectures with that Georgian picture for an example of all that's best, and that the English have not, and must strive for.

This morning I was giving a lesson to my little shepherdess, Jane Anne, and hearing her say her collect for Ascension day. (Of course at school they had never told her the meaning of the word 'Ascension' nor anything about the circumstances referred to!) She is ten years old, docile and intelligent in *her own way* to an extent, and the sheep being extremely eager to get at my young wheat, and as mountain sheep can leap anything but wire fence, and will often thrust through that, Annie has enough to do to defend the upper walls towering on the moor—along half a mile of up and down.

I hope to send *Mamma* the *MS.* of my bit of *Santa Zita*¹ which she was good enough to say she'd like, by the same post.

The needle-case came all right. I couldn't conceive what it was—it shall go to Susie today.

Ever your lovingest

Fratello.

Dearest love to *Mamma*."

¹ Santa Zita, called the Protectress of Lucca. *Tuscan Songs*, Plates Nos. LXVII, LXIX, LXXII, LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXVII, LXXIX.

From Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Bassano, Veneto,
May 27th, 1884.

Mio caro Fratello:

On coming home this morning after a very pleasant visit to a dear old lady of whom I told you in my last letter, I found to my great pleasure your very kind letter waiting me, and I thank you much for it. I, too, am sorry to have the letters delayed so long, but it seems to be unavoidable when we are away from home, and it is better than having them lost. I am so much pleased to know that my letters amuse you. It is certainly very pleasant for me that you can have patience to read all my gossip and that you let me write you anything that comes into my mind.

This is probably the last letter that I shall write you from Bassano, as we have engaged rooms at Venice for the first of June and now almost regret having done so, for it is very hard to part from these dear friends, and from the pleasant family life of which we have been a part. The only trouble with me is that they all want me in three or four places at once. Last Thursday Marina¹ asked me to make a cake, which I often do on an American receipt which is popular in the family. And Silvia,² who is enthusiastically scientific, wanted to give me a lesson in geology. In geological matters, Sylvia

¹ The Countess Marina Baroni and ² her daughter Sylvia, the Countess Pasolini.

obeys the precept to 'exhort in season and out of season' and she sat down by my side and began to explain about the hot springs of Mexico, expecting me, as I well knew, to answer all her questions about them in the evening. Meanwhile, the two children were standing at my knee, much interested in the progress of the cake, and seizing every opportunity to put their fingers into the flour. And I had to keep them out as I best could, until they disturbed the lesson so much that their mother sent them out of the room, when they ran off to the outside door, and amused themselves with ringing the bell in a manner to alarm all the household. And in the midst of all this, Count Pasolini sent me word that he wished I would come into the Museum and help him classify some shells, as he had an English book about them which he could not read without my help. Then Marina came in and complained that the geology prevented me from talking to her, so we laid it aside. And all the time I had to be very careful not to make any mistake in the number of cupfuls of flour and sugar for my cake. This is the way I always have to do things!

I was not able to finish this letter yesterday, and today I meant to have told you about the very delightful old lady¹ whose portrait I am taking. But in the course of the sitting this morning, I managed to learn so much that was

¹ The Mother of the Orphans, *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*.

interesting about her life and the institution over which she presides that I think I shall write it all out carefully and send it to you with the picture, so that you can sell them together, if you like.

Edwige and I set out early in the morning and have a delightful walk up to the city and through the clean little streets with their low, Gothic arcades and little carved balconies full of flowers, meeting nobody but *contadini*,—mostly women, who, if we look at them, bow and smile and say, '*Serva sua.*' The old lady told us she was always ready to begin her sitting by six o'clock, having then finished morning prayers and breakfast. Pretty well for eighty-five, I think! (She says that is her age.)

I had forgotten until this minute that I had promised to tell you about our visit to Castelfranco, but I have not left room to do so. We had a beautiful day, and had the good fortune to find a fair going on and the piazza full of *contadini*, with fruit, chickens, and so forth, and many pretty things in wood and basket work. Always a pretty sight, but it troubled me to see many beggars who looked like respectable old people. I asked our friend Loredana about it, and she said they were *contadini* and that the poverty among them was so great that although a man could live, poorly, by his work, he could never lay by anything for old age, and when they are past work they have to beg. I cannot feel as

if that were right in such a rich and beautiful country, and it is certainly not the case on the estate of Marina and Sylvia. But I am afraid, from what I hear, that our friends are rather exceptional people. Count Alessandro, Marina's husband, always took an almost paternal care of his contadini; but with regard to other contadini in these parts I have heard some heart-breaking stories, which I will not distress you by repeating.

Giorgione's Madonna, whenever I see it, always appears to me more beautiful than the last time and does not look like the work of a mortal hand. It reminds me of what a poor woman said to me once in Florence: 'What a pity that people are not as large now as they used to be!' And when I asked her what made her suppose they were larger in old times, she said, looking surprised, 'Surely you cannot think that the people who built the Duomo were no larger than we are!'

But I must leave you, for Sylvia is coming in a few minutes to look over and correct that translation. She is playing on the piano now downstairs. But I wish you could hear her when she plays on the church organ in the chapel. It is a very grand and sweet-toned old organ, a hundred and fifty years old, they say, rather cumbersome in its machinery, but with a voice to do one's heart good.

Mamma sends much love. I am so glad that

I continue to receive your letters as often as in Florence, which I did not expect. Best thanks for all.

From your affectionate

Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston,

June 1, 1884.

Sweetest and darlingest *Sorella*:

To think that you are going into Venice today! D. V. Do please take my gondolier, Pietro Mazzini of San Francesco della Vigna, 3133, on some of your excursions. He is very good. And of course you'll see my dear friend Boni. And if you can hear or see anything of Mr. Rawdon Brown's Antonio,¹ please tell me, and ask Saint Ursula if she still cares a little for me. I am very anxious to know this. And perhaps Saint Rocco might have just a little bit of benediction for me. And St. Jerome of the Schiaomi. And Father of the Armenians. I've just got his letter, tell him, and yours about Sylvia and Marina and the cake and the geology is so delicious! I've something nice to tell you, too, about the children, but I can't today. Only I'm more and more your loving

Fratello.

Dearest love to *la Mamma*."

¹ Mr. Rawdon Brown was an Englishman who went to Venice for a short stay, but he fell so in love with Venice that he remained there until his death forty years later. Antonio was his gondolier, called "Toni" in Robert Browning's sonnet to Rawdon Brown.

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 6th, 1884.

Sweetest *Mamma*:

Yes, it is you and *Sorella* that make me well. You make me myself—when I’m not myself, and put me in sorts—when I’m out of sorts, and you can’t think how precious and in the very nick and prick of time your history of the picture is, as you’ll see. And please tell me *Mamma*’s story, if she will so grace me that I may know it, and please tell her I want so much to come,—and why not, for I came abroad in ’66 to see that Giorgione (and I never did); and now how much more have I to come for!

But *Mamma*, the chief thing I want just now is that you should counsel and command my dear friend Signor Boni what is best to be done. I’ve told him to call on you and read you a letter I’ve written him this morning—and give you this. Francesca’s drawing is sent to Mr. Patterson, and I’ve written her a letter, too, but it’s gone to the Banca and I want to send this by Boni. And I’m ever your grateful and dutiful and loving
Figlio.”

The “Boni” mentioned in the preceding letter was Sig. Giacomo Boni, a former pupil of Mr. Ruskin’s. He had been appointed by the Venetian Government to the Post of Director of the monuments of Italy.

Mr. Collingwood writes, “Giacomo Boni, the *capo*

d'opera of the Ducal Palace, was doing his best to preserve instead of 'restoring' the ancient sculptures."

The Venetian Government, however, decided to have this work discontinued, and it is to this that Mr. Ruskin refers in the following letter.

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 6th, 1884.

My dearest Boni:

That I have not written to you means really that I have so many and so grateful and so hopeful thoughts of you that I never feel quiet enough in a life of constant work to sit down to express them. I am going to beseech you to consult with my dear friend and Mamma, Mrs. Alexander, now at Venice—and to do absolutely, as I always do, what she bids you; my own wish being that you should leave Venice at once and employ yourself *silently* in carrying on my old work of drawing and measuring what remains in Italy.

This I can promise you certainly as much salary for as your present one is ever likely to become—and I *trust* that I could put you soon at the head of some good architectural work.

I should have much to say of my pride and pleasure in what you have done for my books and me at Venice. But that is useless at Venice,—the city is lost: Elsewhere it might be altogether salutary and strong for good. Meditate on these things and decide please with my *Madre* and *Sorella*, and believe me ever

Your loving friend,

John Ruskin."

In Sig. Boni's work in Venice, Mrs. Alexander and Francesca were of great assistance to Mr. Ruskin as they were able to interest the Countess Marina Baroni. The Baronis were an old and very influential Venetian family. The Countess Baroni exerted all her influence with the Venetian Government, with what success Francesca writes in the following letters to Mr. Ruskin.

“Abetone, July 2, 1884.

Mio caro Fratello:

On the very morning that we left Venice, Sig. Boni came in to take leave; he seems very hopeful and every one says that the Government *must* give him the little help which he wants to carry out his plans. Your so handsome offer to him has been of use to him in a way that you probably did not think of. At first, people pressed him to accept it; and then, when they heard his reasons they began to say that if he were willing to sacrifice such prosperity for the sake of taking care of the old Venetian monuments, it touched the honour of the Venetians that he should not be a loser. The Venetians seem to feel this very much and I hope that we may soon have some good news of him.”

Later, in a letter from Florence, dated May 7, 1885, Francesca quotes from a letter from the Countess Baroni:

“ ‘From Sig. Boni's letter, you will understand that I have fulfilled the duty which I took

upon myself for you, and for the illustrious man whom I revere. I pray you to write about it to your illustrious protector whose amiable letter I hope to answer when the affair is finished.' (Marina knows that I call you *Fratello*, but I suppose she thinks that 'illustrious protector' sounds better.)

"In Boni's letter and in another which he has written to me, he says that his affair is now as good as settled. Marina has been so good. Just as if she had been his mother! And she has worked hard in this matter, and made everybody else work hard, too. I am so thankful, not only for Boni but for the old buildings of Venice, which he will now be able to protect, and for the walls of Bassano. . . ."

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 7th, 1884.

Darling *Mamma*:

You will like to know that yesterday I was going over the pencil lines of a drawing done at Pisa in 1872, with a pen, and found my hand quite steady. I've been drawing or writing scrawls lately, and was afraid I had got shaky. If I tried to show you my steady hand, of course I should shake, so you must take it on trust.

I've a hundred letters to answer—and yet

must scribble this to you. But also, I want the account of the Modern pictures in Florence, and I want to know what Marina means by '*soggezione*'—I want you and Francesca together to write me a little tiny life of Giorgione—with all the nice facts in it and nice memories—and please, I'm your obedient and loving

Figlio.

And please give my love to Edwige."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 20th, 1884.

Darling *Sorella*:

I'm going to give my dear Boni the task of bringing Mammina and you your letters—this postal arrangement will be good for his health and heart—and I enclose it in a good scold about overwork. What a delicious long letter this last is, just like the nightingale's singing at Rezzonico, and how glad I am it isn't like those old letters 'without an accompanying word.' How cross they used to make me!

What I've to tell you today is mainly that, having finished the second number of the songs, and getting the stories together for some printing ahead, I read for the first time the story of Fanetina!¹ I had always shrunk from it before

¹ The Soldier's Love. Plate XXXIII of *Tuscan Songs*.

in my dread of sad things; indeed I was always stopped by the pretty one at the beginning of the book before I got to it. And reading it carefully this morning, I feel that it will enable me to say the last thing I have to say about war after the various vacillations of my former writing about it, and I am going to give it in the number with the Lover's Parting—and to change that number from the 4th to the 6th so that it may come before the 'P——.'

And I think these pictures and stories together will have such an effect as never was yet.

I am thinking very much this morning of getting out a cheap edition for Christmas, of the complete book, without the photographs, placing the photographs at the same time, as they are completed, in the parish schools of each principal town.

I think all this must have been put into my head by Edwige's prayers.

I am keeping very well myself, as the Mammina thinks, but feel age sadly in not being able to climb, or work with pickaxe (a favourite kind of work with me) at a hillside, as I used to do.

Interrupted—can't get anything more done today.

Your lovingest

Fratello."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“All’ Abetone,
July 2, 1884.

Mio caro Fratello:

This is the first free moment that I have had to sit down and write since your letter, with Sig. Bortolo’s, reached me at Venice. I sent you a few lines on the morning that we came away, day before yesterday: that night we passed at S. Marcello, and yesterday reached l’Abetone at about two in the afternoon, after a very pleasant journey. Now I have so many things that I should like to tell you, but I had better begin about Venice, and first of all about Sig. Bortolo.¹

I translated your letter for him, and he keeps it as a great treasure. He asked me, before we parted, to thank you so much for him and to tell you with *tanti saluti*, that he did not write to you again because he did not want to give you the trouble of answering; but if ever he could serve you again in any way he hoped you would command him, for it would be a great pleasure to him. Just before we left, I had a very interesting visit from the wife of your *gondoliere*, Pietro Mazzini, with the little granddaughter who lives with them. The poor woman looks much out of health: she is never tired of talking about you and seems to think that they should all have been dead long ago if it had not been for the help which you have given them, for she says that her

¹ Sig. Bortolo Zanchetta of Bassano.

husband earns but little now at the *traghetto*: one day last week, she said, he earned a franc, and another day nothing at all; and she keeps calling down blessings on your head in Venetian with a rapidity which is rather confusing. Teresina, the child, is a pale, gentle little thing, rather pretty, and has pretty manners, but does not look strong: the grandparents seem quite bound up in her. Later, Pietro Mazzini came, himself, to say good-bye, and to ask how soon I should see his padrone. He was quite disappointed to hear that I was not going to your country: he sent you his salutations, and asked me to tell you that I had seen Teresina, because he said you used to be fond of her when she was a baby. I was really sorry to leave Venice this time. We have had such a pleasant visit. In the last days, after the *cucina economica* had disabled my eyes, I used to amuse myself by taking Edwige to see the pictures and listening to her remarks about them. She preferred to anything else the immense *Paradise* by Tintoretto, in the Ducal Palace, which she looked at for a long time in silence, and then astonished the *custode*, who had been telling a long story about the size, price, and artistic merits of the picture, by saying, 'I hope there is a place for *us* up there, don't you?'

Though I enjoyed Venice, I am glad to be in the country again; it is so pleasant sitting here by my window and writing, and not hearing a

sound, excepting the birds which are singing very sweetly in the fir trees. On our way we stopped at Piansinatico that I might see that dear blind Teresa, the wife of Pietro Petrucci, whose land you saved last year. She is so good and she would be pretty if she were not blind, and I never saw a sweeter or happier face. She was sitting by the door which opens into the little patch where Pietro has planted all his sweet-scented flowers, and which is now full of beautiful roses. And I was so thankful to think they were not going to lose their land: poor people, they take so much comfort in it! Here I have seen but few of my friends yet, but will try and tell you about them all next time. We live in a little house here where the rooms are low and small, but with much more real comfort than in the hotel (where lodgers have not yet begun to come: the place will not be half so pleasant when they do). The little boy of the house is studying his lesson aloud now, in the room under mine, which somewhat disturbs my writing. He goes to school to the priest, and once I wanted to see what he was studying: it was a book about *duty*! I thought the priest might as well have studied it himself, for he is dreadfully intemperate, and no ornament to his profession; and little Bep-pino *really* does his duty, as far as so small a child may be supposed to have any: that is, he takes good care of his little sister, and picks up sticks for his mother to light the fire, and never

gives any one any trouble. I want so much to see what you are going to write about the Priest's office; I know it will be something very grand. You ask if I am resting. . . . I am, much against my will! But my eyes grow better every day, and I hope my next letter may have no blind writing at all. Mammina sends love. Next time I have so much to tell you about this place; but must end now.

Ever your affectionate

Sorella.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 10, 1884.

Sweetest *Mammina*:

I'm so afraid of losing this letter. I return it today—in a time of general revision and—alas—effacement of many precious things—(but none of your letters nor Francesca's are ever lost), those of many an old friend, worn at the edges, yellow with time, pale in faded lines, I look at wistfully as they shrivel into dust.

I get pensive at the turn of the days; but hitherto the years have brought me many joys and more encouragements. You and *Sorella* are quite a new world to me. My best goddaughter says, ‘What a rich godpapa you are, with such a *mammina* and such a *sorella*! and a little goddaughter who cares for you. I think you should

be content.' So do I. But—oh, the shortening days, the irrevocable . . . !

Anyhow, I think Francesca's book is coming nicely.

Your lovingest

Figlio."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 13, 1884.

Darling *Sorella*:

I have been having such a read of Mamma's and your letters, and am so terribly ashamed of having so often left them seemingly unfelt. I trust that no use I may venture to make of any passage in your letters will in the least check your frankness; it is of the deepest consequence to me that you should continue that habit of entirely easy chat, and if ever I let other eyes see the parts which you might have intended for me alone, please blame me and bear with me—but don't ever think, 'I mustn't tell him this or that.'

I think that it is always well for me to act without asking your permission—else there would be perpetual delays and difficulties, and besides I want everything that's found fault with in the book to be my fault—but I do think your passages in the letter of inestimable value in their relation to the book.

Dearest love to *Mamma*. Ever your devoted

Fratello."

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 14, 1884.

Darling *Mamma*:

I was up a little after five this morning and wrote the enclosed preface for Francesca's third number,¹ before my seven o'clock coffee. Then I was out chopping wood till nine. Then at breakfast I got two letters together, one from Venice, one from Leipsic. The Venice, from Boni—the Leipsic from the present editor of the Greek Testament. I'm going to have both the letters copied for you, because I think you will like to keep them, with a bit of Francesca's preface.

I was reading your letters and hers all yesterday nearly, and I hope to get the book completely out, at least in specimen proof, before I return to Oxford in October. Ever your dutiful

Figlio."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 19, 1884.

Darling *Mamma*:

I got your lovely letter and *Sorella's* to-day, with several other good and dear things. I

¹ The first edition of *Roadside Songs* was published in separate numbers.

confess, also, this bit for Francesca's book has been hard; but it's the last thing I had to do to make sure, D. V., that the book should be out before Christmas. I finished it this morning; it goes to the printer on Monday, and the rest of the book can come out as fast as they can print photos and text. I never was so happy in anything I ever did.

For that despondency (without it nothing of my good work could be done) all love means some form of sorrow also—all pleasure, reaction. I knew quite well you were too happy about me—do not now be too anxious—but please remember always that my life has been both fortunate and unfortunate—amiable and foolish—more than most: and can be made only what I can make of it.

I am getting on nicely with more things than I can tell you, and am able *now* to get as much rest as I like. I could not have rested before.

Dearest love to you both. Ever your dutiful
Figlio."

Mr. Ruskin refers in the following letter to Mrs. La Touche, the mother of Rose La Touche who became his pupil in drawing when she was nine years old, and until her death, eighteen years later, was the absorbing love of his life. His want of religious faith, and in fact, as he writes of himself, his having been at one time a skeptic, made Mrs. La Touche bitterly oppose their marriage; and Rose La Touche herself had too strong

religious scruples, much as she loved him, to believe it right for her to marry him.

On the wall of Francesca's room there always hung a little picture of Rose La Touche which had been given her by Mr. Ruskin, and judging from this photograph she must have been very lovely. She was also very talented. We inherited from Francesca a little book with a collection of some of her short stories, which are most charming and fascinating, and show great originality.

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
August 10, 1884.

Darlingest *Sorella*:

Just fancy; this morning at my breakfast your infinitely delightful letter came. I always breakfast by myself to collect my thoughts. Nobody's allowed to come in but Joan, or extremely close friends. One came in today whom I knew so well that I was able to trust her to read a letter of yours. I said, 'Please read me that while I take my porridge.' She opened and read! She was Rose's mother. Her voice did not falter, and I let her read on quietly all about Polissena.¹

I can't write more except that I think we are each happier every day in what we do for each other—you and I. The story of *Assunta*² will be the last in the book, before *The Evening Prayer*. I am getting on with it fast.

¹ *The Peace of Polissena* is the first story in *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*.

² *Assunta*: Plate XCVI of *Tuscan Songs*.

Tell Mammina she must put trust in Providence till I've read all your letters over again and extracted the *bits*. I want to quote—and then I'll do as she bids.

Ever her obedient and your obedient

R.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
August 23, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I got your precious letter by second post yesterday—late, and I've written to the Countess by this same post—all I could. I deeply trust that her goodness will prevail without any of my poor help, but I have said what I could.

I am greatly relieved about your eyes, which have cost me more sorrow than I'll tell you. Please evermore be careful after this.

And I am very, very happy in the form your book is taking—the little supplementary bits enable me to fit it all together into what will be the loveliest thing ever seen, and do more good than the *Fioretti di San Francesco*.

You don't know how strange it was that Rosie's mother read that letter. I never told you that it was chiefly the mother that separated us, and I have been in such bitterness of soul against her as you in your goodness never could so much as conceive. Two years ago, she wrote to Ivan asking if I would forgive her. But I *had* for-

given her, though she did not know it, on Christmas day of 1876 at Venice.

And *she* is happy, though how, I cannot conceive, in being here, and when she read that letter I showed her other things about Rose, which seemed to be good for her. But—if only I could tell you the whole story, as *you* could have told it to me!

Meantime I mustn't write more, for I'm very tired.

Ever your own
Fratello."

"Oxford, October 18, 1884.

Darlingest *Sorella*:

It's a lovely morning, and your letter comes to cheer me and hearten—in beginning the 'winter worries,' to wit—first Oxford lecture to-day. I think you will like having the enclosed bit of *Pall Mall Gazette* about it.

You would have known the sadder part of my life long before this, but you know I didn't think we ought to have confidences with each other and not tell *Mamma*. But if *you* have had days of darkness, she needn't wonder nor mind my having them. However, you never find in those places that you like in my books, or in yours—you never find me speaking in my own person. I say '*we*,' according to the Christian Faith, just as I should say if I were editing a Turk's book—such and such are Turk's principles. I have no

more part in them than wishing them to be true, and believing that if I do not know they are, it is my own fault. Which is the darkest belief of all.

I am very well today and hope to give the first lecture well.

Dearest love to *Mamma*.

Your faithful and grateful

Fratello.”

“Woodstock Road, November 25, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I needed a letter from you greatly and here it has come. I have a great fight here with vivisectionists and the like, and it is only to be fought on the terms of ‘When *thou* art reviled, revile not again’—but it is so difficult!—especially when one is a little proud of one’s power of reviling! Also,—I’m just as hard beset as ever with my own wrongnesses—and the signs I get from the other world are always withdrawn if I get low-thoughted in this one, and sometimes I think they mean that I am not to stay long in this one—where, as far as I can make out, my serious work is just beginning.

But I am most thankful for the change you brought to me—and I have to remember always the ‘Why askest thou after my name’ of the Wrestling Angel.

Look here—you mustn’t try to interpret dreams or think about them. The Interpreter will come in His own time.

Dearest love to *Mamma*.

Your lovingest Franciscan

Fratello."

"84 Woodstock Road, Oxford,
December 2, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

(I've only this pen, all full of wool, like a distaff)—I gave my final (this year's) lecture yesterday and am packing up to get away on Monday next, and here's your long letter, full of good help and deliciousness as usual. Oh, I do wish I could have Santa Rosa, only one of the best things I've learned lately is resolutely not to 'wish'—except that all hungry children might have good meals.

Your fire against the vivisectionists also is a mighty help to me, for the men here are not mean ones but really honourable in their purpose, and many good physicians are with them—among others one of the most good-natured old friends I have! But I'm giving it them gradually more hot and heavy, and they begin, when I meet them in the museum, to slink away around corners.

I am wonderfully well, though I've done as much as I can, just now, and am thankful to get away.

The *Vedova* is perfectly beautiful, but of course not so interesting as the pictures of miracles and nice country. I can't price it yet,

I want to show it and the *Superiora* together in London.

Ever your lovingest
Fratello."

"84 Woodstock Road, Oxford,
December 10, 1884.

Darling *Sorella*:

I'm leaving only today. I stayed for a meeting against vivisection, but little came of it. The good causes are all just now in weak hands, and the wicked flourish like green bay trees.

Your letter comes back from Coniston to comfort me. I never meant my real *friends* were vivisectionists, but men whom I respect, though one may always assume they are atheists to begin with, and the real broad war is with Atheism.

But I'm tired now, and must go to look at moss and feed Robins. It must be very difficult to draw those *little* fidgety birds. I never do any but eagles and owls, who sit like rocks—at least eagles do. I never saw anything more funny than a large owl's eyes, when he was disturbed in his mind by the aspect of my colour box, from whose splendour he at last retired into the farthest corner of his house.

Of course *Santa Rosa*¹ is true—even now—if children are alone enough, wild creatures love them.

¹ The story of Santa Rosa in *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*.

Can't write more today; dearest love to Mamma, and some always to Edwige.

Ever your troublesome

Fratello."

"Cheltenham, December 11, 1884.

Seriously, darling *Sorella*, you must really—for the sake of the truth of the relations between us—not think of me as able to advise or direct you, except in art only. In all the conduct of your life and heart you have been both by nature and by fortunate circumstance—*altogether* wiser, purer, stronger than I. My powers and feelings have been in countless ways wasted, perverted, blinded, only the *Love of Virtue* and the desire to help my fellow-creatures—man and beast—gathering always what was not wrecked, into consistent action and good result—though not the half of what ought to have been. Grant—or insist, if you will,—that my essential powers are wider than yours—my love of good and beauty as true—still the fact is so, that I, at my best, am as a vine torn by a wild boar out of the wood. And you, like grass of Parnassus by its native stream. And never think that I can tell you how to do, or be, more blessed and bright than you are, while you can always cheer me and strengthen by the light of you.

I hope to get the Carpaccio chapel printed directly after Christmas. I was not able to add

anything to either printer's work or mine just now, and I was greatly vexed because at White-lands they changed the day on which your *Superiora* was to have been seen, and I had not time to send her. I hope to show her rightly in London when I return there at the end of January, together with the *Vedova*, a really priceless drawing; but having no background, I do not think it can put above fifty guineas. I will undertake that the cheque for one hundred and fifty guineas for the two (*Superiora and School and Vedova*) reaches you before the end of January.

I have used the story of the Orphanage¹ as you will see, to end *Fors*.

Love and duty to *Mamma*,

Lovingly,

Fratello."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
December 19, 1884.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I got the letter which I was to burn (was to—well, I had better do it if it is to be done. There!—and coals on the top of it, for it looked as if it would fly up the chimney) this morning, to my great help and comfort. I had been thinking over all my happy past life and making up miserable accounts of indefinite Debit. Cer-

¹ This story is called "The Mother of the Orphans" in *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*, and in *Fors Clavigera*.

tainly, Francie, it's a lovely thing to be an only child, with such mothers as you and I have. But—how do you get on, now, that you're 'only' no more?

I had wistful thoughts of giving up everything and coming to Florence to be nursed, but people would miss me here!

.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
December 31, 1884.

Darling *Mamma*:

I ought to have had my letter in time for the New Year, but there was so much I wanted to say, as Francie always says to me (thank God it is so). But I've just got the enclosed letter from Mr. Watts, and send it on to you at once.

I'm afraid you were chilled and frightened when Mrs. La Touche came: but you must put that idea out of your mind. There is nothing now between us but the entirest peace, and I am only too glad if I can make her the least happy, as I know Rose is, too. It is true that having so much company of different sorts did tire me through the summer

Ever your dutiful

Figlio.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Wednesday of Holy Week, 1885.

Mio caro Fratello:

I am afraid this letter will have to be written all in little snatches, for being Holy Week, all my contadini friends come to town and are in and out of my room from morning till evening, bringing the usual array of presents . . . home-made bread, eggs, lemons, flowers, and so forth . . . and I have my hands more than full attending to them all. But holy week seems always somehow to be their week; and many of them are very old friends. This letter will reach you, I hope, on Easter Sunday, but I have nothing better than a leaf of sweet geranium to put in it, as nearly all my flowering plants have gone to church. Two men and two boys came on the terrace yesterday and carried them all off. But I send you today a box of *rosellini*, just to show you the pretty colours. I can almost say of them, as a contadino with a basket of primroses said to me this morning, ‘Will you not buy them? They are the spring!’ These flowers are much loved here, especially by the country people. And, by the way, I did not think when I bought them: I ought to send you the *rispetto* ‘*Fior di Rosellini.*’ There is not much to it, but it has a certain grace about it, and seems to carry one straight to the Apennines. Here it is, with a very literal translation:

Oh, Rosellino! Fior di Rosellino!
Dammi licenza se pensi di lasciarmi!
Ti presi ad amar, quand'eri piccolino:
L'amorche t'ho portato i mesi e gli anni!
L'amorche t'ho portato, i mesi e l'ore!
Oh, Rosellino! rendimi il mio cuore!

Oh, Rosellino, blossom of the Spring!
 At least, if thou wilt leave me, set me free!
 I loved thee, when thou wast a little thing:
 The months and years I've passed in loving thee!
 The months and hours! And now . . . do we
 thus part?
 Oh, Rosellino! Give me back my heart!

My plants have gone to church in my place to-day, for I have such a cold I can't go at all, and it has brought back the mist to my eyes, so that I have to write half-blind, and you must excuse the looks of the letter. Edwige has been to Santa Maria Novella, and came back crying and wishing that I had been there, because there has been a procession, as she says, 'Just like the funeral procession when they carried our Lord to the tomb.' There was a great wooden cross carried by men with hoods over their faces, and then the long banner, and the *Santissimo* under a *baldachino*; and then, all the gentlemen with torches and children—some of them little bits of ones—with candles, and all the servants of the families in their liveries; and then women, and all the people coming after! One could not keep from tears, for I kept thinking it must have been very

like it—the day they buried our Lord! For they all looked so sad! Of course everybody feels sad in these days. I was interrupted in the middle of that sentence, as usual; and now the morning has all passed, one coming in before the last had gone, and now I have but a few minutes left, sitting among the sheaves of tulips and branches of apple-blossom.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
April 16, 1885.

Darlingest *Mamma*:

I *am* happy this morning—with your letter and *la Sorella*'s. There was nothing I wanted so much as that you should like the book—and that you should like it *thus* is a most true mother's blessing to me.

I think the *Suora* such a lovely subject that I should like her to try again, *if it comes to her*—never unless so, and I want her to do a few light and shade studies first, *thinking* of the light and shade. Her landscape done for me is all perfectly right, on the key she chose—and the sunlight on Ida perfect in conception.

Dearest love to her.

I'll try your way of getting happier—in what I have and can do.

(I should like that cocoanut cup.)

Ever your gratefulest and lovingest

Figlio."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
April 27, 1885.

Darling *Sorella*:

No, of course *I* can't do it by myself—nor *anyhow*—that's why I say I'm so bad. Pray as I like, I always do all sorts of wrong just the same—and for little pains—well—I try to bear them as the animals do. I don't feel that I'm meant to pray that thorns shouldn't prick me. And I sympathize dreadfully with the old Berwick boatman's prayer, 'Oh, Lord, we dinna trouble thee often—an' if ye'll just tak' us ow're the bar this ance, we'se ne'er trouble thee again.'

Oh me, I wish I could get a copy of that gospel of Edwige's.

Please, you'll see in the 8th No. of *Songs* that I've asked you to tell us the legend of St. Christopher¹ in prose in your own way—so you must please set about it—for I've sent a lot more about anything *but* St. Christopher for No. 9, so we must have a word or two about him to finish. . . ."

¹ "St. Christopher"—*Tuscan Songs*, plates Nos. XXXVI, XXXVIII, XL, XLII, XLIV, XLVI.

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence, Di 7 Maggio, 1885.

Mio caro Fratello:

At last I hope that I may be able to write to you a little quietly, for really I never seem to find a leisure hour now. I was much astonished to hear that the *Roadside Songs* are done, for I had not supposed that you had even begun No. 10; and I thank you so much for telling me all the particulars about it. I think the two last numbers will be lovely, especially your remarks about St. Christopher, and I am in much haste to hear what you think about him. You never seem to think about *anything* just as others do, and I know now that you will tell me something about the story that neither myself nor my contadini friends, who have talked it over with me so often, ever thought of.

Fratello, I wish that there were any way that I could tell you, not only how thankful I am to you for your kindness to *me*, but also for your care in preserving the memory of people and things dear to me, that would have been all forgotten without you. That the old songs and hymns that Beatrice sang to me, and that I sang to Ida, and to so many who are gone now where she is, should enter into the lives of children in the far-away English schools . . . that the heavenly visions seen by good Sig. Rossetti¹ and

¹ Minister of the Evangelical Church in Florence.

by dear Cesira¹ when they were departing, should comfort the faith of others besides us who were with them . . . that the memory of so many of the 'hidden servants' which is such a blessing in my life can now belong to others as well as myself. . . . I wonder if you know what all this is to me! I hope you do, for it is a great deal more than I can put into words. But no doubt you will have your reward for it all, either in this world or the next, and, I hope, in both. I am glad at last that this is no longer on your mind; and I hope now there will be nothing to disturb you in writing your own recollections. For a long time I had a certain remorse in thinking that my little stories and contadine rhymes were taking time from your own important work.

Your letter of May 3rd was not to me, and *Mamma* has answered it; but, as we always consider a letter to one of us as if it were written to both, you will not be displeased if I too send you a word about what lately has been so much in our minds. When I read all that you say, it seems to me that you have been all these years carrying such a heavy and such a needless burden! I have thought for a great while, when you have spoken to me about Rosie, that you did not take all that comfort in her that I take in Ida, and in some, nearer to me than Ida, who are already gone home; but I never understood until

¹ Edwige's daughter.

lately that you blamed yourself on her account. It took me a great while to understand it, because I never heard of people thinking there was anything wrong in loving each other, and it does seem to me the strangest idea. And since you have let me speak so freely to you, I want you to let me speak once again, and have patience with me, for it is the last time. There are only just one or two little things that seem so *very* plain to me that I should like to say them, and you will take them for just what they are worth—one or two questions, that I wish you would try to answer to *yourself*, not to me. If you think you did wrong, what do you suppose would have been right? That you should not have cared for each other? But do you suppose that either of you could have helped it? ‘*Al cuore non si comanda.*’ There is a good text out of Edwige’s gospel. Do you think you ought to have concealed your attachment to her? Your Mamie in her beautiful letter said that her affection was a gift from Heaven; and this I believe; but then, I believe that *your* affection was a gift of Heaven to *her*, and you had no right to keep away from her what the Lord had given her: You do not think *you* gave it to her, do you? Do you think you could give it to any one you chose? If the mother chose to turn your good into evil, you had no more responsibility about it than if you had given her a glass of pure spring water, and the mother had put poison in

it. But supposing you *had* concealed your feelings, and she had died all the same. Would you not then blame yourself on the other hand, and say, 'I might have saved her'? Or supposing (what is not very likely) that the mother had married her to a husband of her own choosing—would you not rather have her in Heaven than suffering what one like her *must* have suffered in that moral starvation and imprisonment of the heart, a marriage of convenience? If you would not, it must be because you have not seen as much as I have of such marriages, which are the curse and ruin of my beautiful Italy. And as for the parents trusting you—there, I may as well confess it; I lost my patience a little, when you brought forward such a reason as that against yourself.

Do you think it would have been better for her to have loved some one whom they did not trust, or had a bad opinion of? And now I have done, and trust you to forgive my plain speaking, for which I can only make my old excuse—that I cannot help it!

I have written thus far, and they bring me your very kind and pleasant little letter of the fourth, for which best thanks; also the papers about the May queen, which look very interesting. But I will write more about them in my next, for as I was just going to S. Rosa, I could not read them carefully, but will do so tomorrow. My eyes are very tired now after my morning's

work (and yours will be if you read much of this blind writing).

Edwige has been entirely overpowered at the idea that her dead Cesira's story was to be published; she says it will make Cesira so happy if she knows that she is to be of use to people after she is dead, for all she ever cared for was to do good when she was alive.

Mamma sends love, in which I join, and am always

Your affectionate

Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Whit-Tuesday, 1885.

Darlingest *Sorella*:

As if my letters were worth numerals—but I've done my best to begin with. Alas, that there wasn't one by the post you expected, but I've been much tired in London, quite incapable of keeping up to letters,—chiefly those I most cared for. I must answer at least that pained question of *Mamma*'s and yours, about preface to *Praeterita*. It did not mean that I wished to die—far from it—but that the fear of death is lightened by the hope of being with them again.

Very little lightened, when I think there are bad signs of me—I'm much more sorry and frightened than when I was young—partly because some people will miss me more—partly

because I've wiser plans if I could live to do them.

Oh me—I wish you would leave Santa Rosa till you come back from Venice.

I am very nervous about your eyes.

Can't say any more today, but I love you better and better every minute.

Your *Fratello*."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 13, 1885.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

I answer first—the question—of Mr. Albert Fleming.

One of the best men in the world. His father left him a good business as a solicitor, on which he wrote to me, saying he had understood that I had written of law. Would I advise him to give up his business. I answer 'No.' Follow it, and be as honest in it as you can till you are independent; *then* retire. This he did, to the letter, and is now an independent—not rich—gentleman, living in a pretty house of his own which has the most beautiful view of Longdale that exists, from his study windows.

There, he has organized hand-spinning and hand-looms, in obedience to St. George. He could only find *one* hand-loom left in North England—and nobody in Longdale knew how to put it up. He found out how from the photograph of Giotto's sculpture on his tower—weaving!

He has now more demand for his mountain spinnings than he can supply.

My 'secretary,' Miss Anderson, who is an extremely good and wise Scot lassie, shall copy for you the account written to Susie of his late interview with Princess of W. on this subject. . . .

Your devoted *Fratello*."

Miss Anderson to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
July 18, 1885.

Dear Miss Alexander:

Mr. Ruskin says because he is in rather a naughty mood he is sending you a pencilled penguin by W. Marks to show you a 'pious bird.' And I am also to say he has doubled the price of some of your drawings.

Mrs. La Touche is at the Waterhead Hotel. I know you will understand the strain.

Yours ever sincerely,
Sara D. Anderson."

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
September 25, 1885.

Most precious *Mamma*:

It is the chief thing that gives me any hope of myself—next to Joanie's love of me, that

you and *Sorella* care so much for me, and that I have indeed an intense sympathy in all your pleasures, though my own, for the time are ended. Every word you write—each of you is joy and strength to me; and you are the more to me because my life has been so strangely loveless till now. I have taken the chance of the people who came in my way—and never sought for true friendship—till at last it has come to me—if only I may be spared in its possession. And still I can't understand how I have been permitted, out of my selfish and faithless life, to have any part in her sacred one.

I was utterly ashamed to send *Sorella* those unfinished sketches, but if ever I try to finish, I spoil. I have no real gift for drawing—but only for seeing, but the method of them, as *Sorella* saw, is a useful one.

I have been at Bassano—for—one night—forty years ago! I remember the look of the distant towers, of the frescoes I saw. All Francesca tells me is delicious.

I would fain take another sheet. If only—sheet or ink—wide and full as they could be would bear the least bit of my grateful heart to you.

Ever your devoted *Figlio*,
J. Ruskin."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
October 1, 1885.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

. . . Joanie insists upon writing the rest for me—which is mainly that you, she, and *Mamma*, are now the chief lights of my life. For my garden is not like *your* terrace. I never could do anything in it but dig a hole! And now I can't even do that, because I can't hold a pick-axe. The flowers are always withering as soon as I get interested in them—the mice eat all the apples—and the birds all the plums.

I walk up and down the upper terrace of flat turf, and the beautiful Lake is before me—and the beautiful hills above me—and all they say to me is that I am old, and ugly!—my best hour of the day is having tea with Joan—and the second best going to bed, being tucked up by her, after having had a cup of bread and milk!

The days on which letters come from *Mamma* and you are also shiny ones. I really think I am of an affectionate nature, though I've lived all my life alone. . . .”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Bassano, October 10, 1885.

Mio caro Fratello:

I am so glad that it is Sunday morning again, because this is the day when I always

write to you (though now I do not confine myself to one day but am indulging myself a little more for two or three weeks, by way of making up for lost time when you were ill) ; and the first things I saw this morning, when it was light enough to see anything, were the Alps above Recoaro all white with snow: in a few minutes they were shining out in the sunshine above the valley in shadow, just like a piece of Heaven! And the Virginia creepers are all turning scarlet, and I think I never saw anything so beautiful as the place at this season.

But we have been passing two or three sad days, for our dear Angelina has been taken ill at the Locanda in Bassano, and it is hard not to have her able to come to us when she came to Bassano on purpose. Angelina was the first person who ever *adopted Mamma*, and gave her that name; and to me she has been a true sister for a great many years now. Some day I will tell you more about her, and her life in Peru, where she went with her husband at *fourteen*. Meanwhile, I must not dwell on stories of sickness and trouble; and I hope in a few days she will be about again. Marina has just this minute sent us up such a platter of fruit gathered in that wonderful vineyard of hers! Great *branches* of grape-vine, with heavy bunches of fruit hanging between the green leaves, and *such* pomegranates, burst open on the tree! I said as I caught sight of them, how I wished I could

send you one of those pomegranates; for I never saw anything of the kind so beautiful! The evenings have grown too cold now for me to sit on the door-step and tell the children stories in the afternoon, so now we sit around the table with lighted candles, and my duties have become somewhat heavier, as all the family attend and I have to choose some story that will please everybody, from the grandmother to little Bebo. Yesterday evening, I am sorry to say, Silvia and Pierino had a quarrel as to which should have the seat next to me to hear *Beauty and the Beast* (for the third or fourth time) and I had to make peace by putting myself in the middle, after enquiring which was the oldest child of the two . . . a question which nobody answered! My audience consists of Marina, who, as you know, has had a strange life of trouble and romance, and heroic adventures with Austrian soldiers and spies; of Silvia, who has had enough to sober her, one would think, besides her poor health and scientific propensities; of the little German governess, and the two children. Besides these we have often a friend of the family who comes to pass the evening. And they are all very critical, and will not allow me to slight any part of my story, and ask me the most difficult questions. . . . Bebo, last night, *would* know who kept the Beast's palace in order and cooked the supper; and they expect me to describe minutely the dresses that Cinderella wore to the ball on both



occasions, also her sisters' dresses. Bebo often entertains us with stories of his own, showing much power of invention, and a sublime disregard of impossibilities. The other day, when his brother passed the examination, he asked why *he* could not have an examination, too (he is just six), and his Mother asked what he should be examined in: to this he replied, 'Reading, writing, and telling stories!'

Yesterday, I went for the last time to the exhibition with Silvia and Prof. Secco, who is a distinguished geologist, as I think I told you once before, and we had a delightful hour examining the wonderful petrifications, and the many kinds of marble and alabaster found in these mountains, besides various minerals and crystals; and we were greatly entertained by hearing his explanations of them.

Some of them are of wonderful beauty, especially the marbles, which have every shade of green, purple, yellow, black, rose-colour, and white. They have also sapphires, jacinths, and other precious stones, all found in the hills about us.

I was also taken to see the artificial flower department, which all Bassano is wild about; but, with one or two exceptions, the flowers were to me suggestive rather of starch and flat-irons than of a garden. I did *not* revisit the 'fine arts department.'

The exhibition closes tomorrow.

Our good Sig. Bortolo Zanchetta is ill; not seriously, but confined to the house for a few days; and everything in Bassano going at sixes and sevens in consequence.—Nobody in Bassano can divide an inheritance, or make up a quarrel, or conclude any business of importance without Sig. Bortolo. I have been called away, with Silvia, to go to Angelina, and now at my return have only two or three minutes to finish this. Angelina has been telling me the loveliest story about an Indian that she knew in Peru, that I will write you next time. Much love from *Mamma* and me as ever.

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
October 26, 1885.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

. . . As for that Ida Song money—of course it’s all yours. What did *I* do but put in a naughty note or two?

Why do you ask if there’s anything different in Tuscans? Of course there is—they’re the finest race of the earth—you don’t suppose one could have got the Baptistery built by Esquimaux—or copper-coloured and soot-coloured folk?

.
Fratello.”

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 13, 1885.

Darlingest *Sorella*:

It is a joy to be able to do anything for you—or say anything that you like—but then, you are so easily pleased—so impossible to be displeased! And Joanie's very like you in that: I've just given her a little lot of leaf sketches to put up for you, and she's ever so pleased to have the packing of them. I'll gather some bits of living things the first day I can get up the moor.

And of course I am glad to be so far able to get about and see things again, and to be some good and pleasure to my friends. But the *Mamma* expects too much for me. She does not yet know the feeling of not being able to do the things she used to—she has in her yet the exhilaration of youth. To me, the loss of the power of climbing hills, of drawing with hope of doing something pretty, of writing any syllable of what is in my mind. . . .

Fratel.”

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 29, 1885.

Darlingest Sorel:

It is *such* a wet Sunday morning, but a letter from *Sorella* makes it all bright, and I'm so proud of her liking my budding spray. I must try and be like an old oak myself, and bud for her, here and there.

There's a merry omnibus full just driven away to church! Nobody ever seems here to dislike going to church as I used to do, and we're obliged to have a tourist omnibus for the household.

Arthur himself, who came home on Friday; little Lily—or tall Lily she's beginning to be—my secretary Sarah, our beautiful governess Clennie, our country kitchen-maid, who has quite a *Paolina* look in 'going to church,' the children's maid Susan, a bright little dutiful nursery tutelar spirit; and they've got to pick up a nice girl, Ethel Hilliard, on the road, besides. I wished they had room for me, too! But Joanie stays at home to comfort me, and be Susan to the younger children; and I've your letter and a sweet one, too, from little Katie of the Kindness Society. And I've got my sea-gull in the out-house. On the whole, I'm not to be painfully pitied.

How wonderful the new story about Edwige, and what mercy she had you to show her *soldo* to; but I can't understand how it was possible for her to remain till then ignorant of gold. Alas for Florence and her *florin*.

Dearest love to *Mamma*, and tell her I've really been very good—Joan says so—and ever your gratefulest and lovingest

Fratello."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
December 5, 1885.

Sweetest Sorel:

These chatty letters of yours are so delicious, but what a blessed simplicity of a child angel you are! The reason our people like to go to church—is—Joanie's:—that she likes doing everything that is proper—Clennie's:—something of the same sort—and inscrutable (to me) ideas about Sunday bonnets—Diddie's:—to put me to shame for not going—Lily's:—because she likes an outing and isn't scolded if she doesn't remember the text. (Nobody ever asks but me.)

Your lovingest

Fratello.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“December 31, 1885.

Mio caro Fratello:

I cannot tell you how very happy it made me on my return home this morning to find awaiting me your most kind and pleasant letter, which I was wishing for. And a few minutes afterwards came the precious music, written (and so beautifully written) by your hand . . . the loveliest of New Year presents! Thank you a thousand times for all! I was in such a hurry to write you my thanks that I have only tried the music over once: the chords are very beautiful and expressive.



FRANCESCA ALEXANDER
From a painting by Francis Alexander

I have had great honour for the *Roadside Songs* lately: only think of part of it being read in a Catholic church! My friend Lilly Cleveland has an uncle who is a Catholic priest—Father George Doane, Vicar-General of the state of New Jersey—and his sister, Lilly's mother, sent him the 'Songs' for a present. She has just sent me the note of thanks which he sent her, in which he told her that he had been reading the story of Saint Christopher, with Edwige's comments upon it, to his congregation after mass, adding only a few prefatory remarks of his own! And something else, that I heard about *Ida*, pleased me even more. A young lady from Baltimore came to my room the other day with some friends, and she was telling me about a society of ladies in her city to which she belongs, which looks after poor girls, seamstresses, shopgirls, etc., especially those who come from the country and are far from their families. The object of the society is to provide the girls with cheap and comfortable lodgings, to keep a good restaurant for them *only*, to take care of them in sickness, and to make them acquainted with friends to whom they can apply in any trouble or emergency. A lending library is also kept for them, in which, among the other books, are several copies of *Ida*, and these are always in request. When the girls first begin to borrow books, they care for nothing but novels of the most sensational description. Then they are told about

Ida; and when they hear that she was a poor working-girl like themselves, they feel a curiosity to read her story, which always interests them, from its resemblance, in many respects, to their own lives. And after reading the preface, they ask about *you*, and want to read some of your books.

The lady in charge usually begins by lending them *Sesame and Lilies* which is a delight to them; and then the bad novels begin to lose their attractions, and many of the girls develop a taste for really good and valuable reading. It is pleasant, is it not? to think that you, and Ida, and I, should be all together helping those poor girls and brightening their lives away in Baltimore, where not one of us has ever been!

But I must end—*Fratello*, there was just one word in your letter that troubled me! Do, if you care for me, try and not let people make you angry, whether they do right or wrong: I do not think there is anything worth worrying about, certainly nothing worth *your* worrying about, for it might make you ill, which would be worse than any other harm they can do. This is the last day of the old year. May the new one bring you every happiness and blessing, spiritual and temporal, for you and all whom you love. This is the constant prayer of *Mamma* and your

Sorella.”

“February 3, 1886.

Mio caro Fratello:

I hoped to have written you a long letter this time, but as it is, I am afraid I shall have to content myself with only a few lines; for, if possible, I want this to arrive the *evening before* your birthday. On the day itself you will have so many letters that I think you will be quite tired with them all, and would rather have one less than one more, and I should like to have mine the last letter of the year that is going—to come when you are quiet and alone, only to tell you how I hope and pray that this year of your life may end, and the next begin, in all peace and blessedness. And I do thank the Lord with all my heart that after all the trouble and anxiety of last summer, the day finds you with restored health, and able once again to take comfort, and *give* comfort in your work. And I hope the next year, and as many more as it may please Him to give you, may find you and leave you well and happy—at peace and at work. That is the best I can wish for you; for I feel somehow that of all your earthly comforts, your work is the one that you would find it hardest to give up. One can understand it in such work as yours. . . . But does it never seem strange to you how people come to enjoy *every* kind of work? There is Angelo Bernardi, Beatrice's son; he is poor and works very hard, and most people would think it a sad fate for a poet (and he *is* a poet) to pass

his life among stones and mortar. But what do you think he said to me once? 'I never could have been anything but a builder, I had such a passion for building from the time I was a child! My family wanted me to stay on the farm, but I could not! Oh, but you cannot think what beautiful work it is—nobody knows who has not tried! When the evening comes, I am always sorry, and do not want to stop; I always want to see how the wall will look when I have done a little more, and so I work on, quite into the darkness!' All this said with that peculiar *inspired* manner that he learnt, or inherited, from his wonderful mother.

Now as to my work, I have a great deal to do just now; and the lady of whom I wrote you in my last letter has been back, and brought a beautiful girl with her, whom I suppose to be Maggie, but she only introduced her as 'my daughter' (which is an uncomfortable habit that most of my visitors have), and I am to draw her likeness next week. But meanwhile I do not know the name of either of them, which is awkward, and have to call the lady 'Madam' and the girl 'My dear.' Maggie is about sixteen, dark-eyed, curly-haired, fresh-coloured, with perfect features, and as wild as a hawk, as American girls are apt to be at that age, with more energy and spirits than she knows what to do with. Her mother says that no one has ever been able to take her likeness, so that I am a little dismayed,

more particularly as she appears quite incapable of keeping still for two minutes together; but at least I shall enjoy having that lovely face to study.

I have just been looking at the letter which *Mamma* has been writing to my dear *cugina*, and see that she has forgotten to answer her about the American robins. They have bright red breasts, and their wings are dark and glossy like those of a swallow. They come home to New England in the early spring and their sweet whistle seems to give us the feeling of spring more than any other sound. On Boston Common there are *hundreds* of them, in the middle of the city, building their nests in the great elm-trees. They are gentle creatures, almost as gentle as the doves at Venice.

Do please give my love to Joanie, and show her this account, since she cared to know about them. But the golden robin, of which I wrote you before, *weaves* its nest instead of building it, of a sort of strong, perfectly flexible cloth, into which it will work almost any kind of material. It ties its soft little bag of a nest on to a very slender branch, where it hangs rocking all day in the wind, so tightly that it *never* falls unless the branch falls with it.

But I must finish this long rambling letter, so good-bye for now. And among all the thousands of prayers that will go up for you tonight and tomorrow, there will be none more sincere and

earnest, though there may be many more worthy, than those of your

Sorella.

(Here is a *rispetto* that has been running in my head all day: the translation is poor, but the original so pretty I must send it to you. It is about the spring, when the men come home from the Maremma:

*È ritornato il fior di primavera,
È ritornato la verdura al prato.
È ritornato chi prima non c'era,
È ritornato il mio innamorato.
L'è ritornato la pianta col frutto,
Quando c'è il vostro cuor, il mio c'è tutto.
L'è ritornato il frutto colla rosa;
Quando c'è il vostro cuor, il mio riposa.*

The flower of spring has come to earth once more,
Grass to the field, and blossoms to the tree,
And he has come who was not here before,
The spring has brought my love again to me.
The plants are green, the trees with blossoms shine;
And where your heart is, there is all of mine.
And on the brier has blossomed out the rose;
And where your heart is, there can mine repose.

In the language of the mountain people, 'frutto' means any kind of tree."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“February 8, 1886.

Darling *Sorella*:

Your lilies of the valley were beside me at breakfast; and my first work after breakfast has been correcting the proofs of the *Story of Lucia*.

Very thankful am I that my life has been spared to do so. My happy task is farther set me today by the enclosed letter from Allen, which I answer next after this.

I wish my *Sorella* could see the drawing Miss Kate Greenaway has sent me—referred to in the enclosed piece of end of note—I should like you to see little pieces of her notes sometimes. I want you to know her and like her, and the knowing you will do her good; this is a tiny bit of introduction.

Dearest and devotedest love to la Mamma. Love to *Edwige*, and to Lucia, very particularly; Beatrice would not care.

Ever your devoted and grateful and loving
Fratello

J. Ruskin.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence,
March 13, 1886.

Fratello mio:

Just as I was finishing this, your letter arrived with the most precious and beautiful one

from Rosie. She was herself when she wrote that; it is lovelier than anything I have seen of hers yet. How can I ever thank you for trusting me with such treasures? And I have so very much to say to you, that I think I had better not try to say it today, but will write you at length in a day or two. Only just one word now—In the envelope which you have marked, 'For *Sorella*. This is an earlier one,' there was no letter, but a very beautiful piece of poetry apparently in Joanie's handwriting, entitled 'Love,' and commencing: 'Love that cannot fail with time.' Do please explain this to me when you write again. And now I will not try to write more, or I shall send you eight pages instead of four, and you will be tired before you have done reading them.

Only I am so very sorry about the scalding, and especially just now when Joanie is away, and in this dreadful cold weather! You must be having a sad, dull time, shut up in the house with the snow outside, and with such an accident to prevent you (I suppose) from even taking many steps in the house; and I know that a scald is a very bad hurt, though I never had one. Please do not fail to tell us about it when you write again, for we shall both be anxious to hear that you have quite recovered, though I am thankful that you write as if the worst were over. Oh *Fratello*, your letter and hers have a little upset me this time, and I have so much to say,

and do not quite know how! But I will try and put my thoughts into order, and into words, by tomorrow: just now they come too many and too fast.

Good-bye for now! Love as ever from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

“Florence,
March 14, 1886.

Mio caro Fratello:

Today is a dark, rainy Sunday, and I am not sorry because now I can sit down and write to you without the fear of people being in and out all the time. Your letter and poor Rosie's have been in my mind ever since I received them yesterday: I keep turning over your words and hers, and they give me much new light on things which I am only just beginning to understand. I think she tried to prevent your loving her, as she thought too much, because she recognized her own condition, and probably felt that whoever loved her would have to suffer with her and for her. She does not seem to have understood that you would have found your greatest happiness in making her happy, as far as she could be made so; during the little time that she had to stay here. I wish, for her sake and yours, that things had been different, and that you could have a few happy years to look back upon. But do remem-

ber, that not your love, nor any earthly love, could have lengthened the time; in any case, things would have been now . . . just where they are. There is no use in trying to keep with us those who are not of this world; one might as well try to keep a rainbow. I do not think you 'bothered' her, and it would have been well if she had not been afraid to trust you—and herself. She speaks as if your goodness to her were a great comfort, but she seems to have suffered from the unkindness of her family, and she longed to go—and after all, you could not have made her half so happy as the Lord made her when He took her home! I still think that her illness had begun to work on the mind, so that she was not always herself (I can in no other way account for her being, as she seems to have been, at different times, two different people—*this* letter has nothing in common with the two you sent me before, excepting the handwriting) and I never read anything more heart-breaking than the words in which she speaks of her own condition. I think I know my *Sorella* better, since I have read this letter, and she is brought nearer to me than ever before. But, *Fratello*, the trouble is over for her a great while ago. Do try, by the Lord's help, to let it be so, as far as possible, for you, too. It is not very easy for me to write you about this, because, take it as one will, the story is so sad; and I fear always that in spite of all my care, my words will give you pain;

but at least you know with what a heart I write them! So do not be angry with me if I say what is in my mind this minute. If she could have been all yours—as the Lord knows I wish with all my heart she might have been—you would have had some beautiful memories in your life now, but you would not have had much else. You say yourself that you would have sacrificed *everything* for her; and when she was taken, you would have found that all your life had gone with her. But there is no use talking; one must fall back on Ida's saying: '*He knows what He does.*' There is no great comfort outside of those words.

I have no heart to write about anything else today; but I must tell you how very much I felt your kindness in putting *my* letter with *hers*—indeed, I felt it too much to say more about it. I do not quite think I explained what I meant about casting burdens on the Lord. I do *try* (sometimes I succeed and sometimes I do not) to leave my cares with Him, especially with regard to my own failures and incapacities; but I do not try not to *feel* my own troubles, nor those of others, for I do not think He expects that of us. *He* bore and felt more trouble than any of us when He was here. I will not write more now, and if I am a 'miserable comforter' I can wish only that I were a better one. And let us try to enjoy our treasures in Heaven, and not feel as if they were treasures lost, when they

are really the only ones we never can lose, unless we lose ourselves. (And I trust our Master will never let us do that!) Please do not forget, when you write again, to tell us about that beautiful poetry which we have been wondering and conjecturing over, ever since it came. *Mamma* thinks it must be by some *old* poet. And I think it is too good and too powerful to be modern. She sends love as always; I will send you a longer letter next Saturday, and meanwhile am always

Your affectionate and most grateful

Sorella.

I do want to add one word about what you said to *Mamma* about David and the way his sin clung to him as long as he lived.—You always let me tell you all my thoughts.—Are we not living under a different dispensation now? I know it was so with all the Old Testament saints, but I cannot find one such case in the New Testament. Saint Paul was a very wicked man before he was converted, and Saint Peter denied his Master. But I cannot see that those things were ever remembered against them afterwards, or that they ever remembered them against themselves. It seems to me, when the Lord forgives us, we ought to forgive ourselves. Of course I do not mean that you shall answer the things I say. I talk to you as if I were talking to myself.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
March 15, 1886.

Darling Sorel:

It's lovely your taking Rosie's poetry for an old master's. I find the wicked little witch sent it to Joan—as if it was merely addressed to the Spaces and Eternities—and Joan copied it for me.

Remember, however, I've been sending you her letters at five-and-twenty. I'll copy you a rhyme at eighteen when I've time.

Joanie home yesterday—ever so much better in very serious ways. She had not told me how ill she was.

You darling Sorel! Who told you St. Paul was a wicked man before he was 'converted'? He was no more converted than Cornelius, or Matthew, or Nathaniel. Christ never called wicked people. (The devil didn't get into Judas himself till the supper!) Christ didn't call the Magdalene herself—only let her come. Just be so good as to read Acts XXII, 3—and 10. He simply asks what he is to do. Not in the least frightened, not in the least ashamed of himself; his conscience as clear as the light that struck him down.

Then read XXIII, 7, XXIV, 14, XXVI, 4, 5, 6, 9, 18, and see what naughty things you've been thinking of the Apostle who of all men

was the most obedient, the most loving, unselfishly.

St. John loves as a friend, St. Paul as a teacher and deliverer.

Your loving
Fratel."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
March 16, 1886.

Darling *Sorella*:

So many thanks for every word you write, always. The account of chapel is invaluable to me.

I 'dipped' for those letters and only glanced at the poem. I thought it was Rosie's original. I suppose Joan copied it to keep herself, or the like.

Rosie wrote a great deal of verse. *Of course* she was out of her mind in the end; one evening in London she was raving violently till far into the night; they could not quiet her. At last they let me into her room. She was sitting up in bed; I got her to lie back on her pillow, and lay her head in my arms, as I knelt beside it.

They left us, and she asked me if she should say a hymn. And I said yes, and she said, 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' to the end, and then fell back tired and went to sleep. And I left her.

Ever your lovingest
Fratello."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence,
March 20, 1886.

Mio caro Fratello:

I was just going to write to you this morning, when your beautiful and very interesting letter was brought to me with so much that I should like to answer and do not feel at all able to; but at least I must thank you for telling me things so precious for me to know, and for the confidence with which you write to me, and for which I am most grateful. I was almost afraid to write you what I did about my poor *Sorella*; but now I see that I was right, and that the words that seemed so unlike her were not really *hers* but only the fancies of her illness, for which she was no more responsible than for her dreams. I am thankful for you that you have at least this to remember, that you were able to give her relief when no one else could, and at the time when she suffered most: I should think that remembrance, sad as it is, would be always a comfort and blessing in your life. But I cannot tell you how it went to my heart that she should have been comforted by *our* hymn (as Silvia always calls it), the one which I wrote you about from Rezzonico, and which I am always singing to myself when I am alone; and it will now be dearer to me than ever. I think, *Fratello*, with all your sorrow and loneliness, which this departure put into your life, that you must sometimes find it in your

heart to give thanks for *her*, safe now with the Friend whom she loved so dearly that His name was sufficient to give her peace, even in delirium! And I *know* that in the bottom of your heart, you would rather have her *there* than—where she would be now, if her life had been prolonged. But I will not say more; some things are too sad to speak of, or even to think of—and yet perhaps it is well to realize a little what she was saved from, in being called home so early!

I was astonished to hear that the poetry was hers; we had both supposed it by some old poet, probably one of the greatest. . . . *Mamma* suggested Milton, but I told her that if it had been by him we should certainly have seen it before. I am glad that I read it without suspecting that she wrote it, as otherwise the love that has grown up in my heart for that dear saintly Rosie (and which increased with all that I know about her) would have made me distrust my own admiration of it. She must have been a wonderful woman! But I am going to try this time not to fill my letter with what after all it must sadden you to dwell upon; (though I should like to go on writing about her to the end of my four pages:) and there is much else that I must say today.

First of all, you do not say a word about your scalded foot, nor indeed about yourself in any way; I hope that you are quite well again now, and so just did not think of it: but do please let

us know when you write again just how you are, for you know we are so far away and have no one whom we can ask about you. We have been hearing about you lately from a friend whom I little expected to see, and from whom I enclose a letter—Prof. Gregory, from whom you sent me two very interesting letters to read a long time ago.

He was here for only a very few days, and those so busy that he had not time even to walk through the gallery or to go once into the country to see the Florentine hills in spring, as he much wished to; still, he was so kind as to come and see us, and brought me a letter from Sig. Boni, whom he had just seen in Venice. *Mamma* arranged that he should come in and dine with us every day while he was here (as our dinner hour came just at the most convenient time for him, when the libraries were closed) so that we had three or four short, but most interesting, visits from him, for which I must thank you, as he said that he wished to come at first in consequence of what you had told him about us. He told us a great deal about you and Joanie and the children, and described to us minutely your home and manner of living, and the country about you, and especially your great kindness to him—all of which was a great pleasure.

The early poetry which you promise to send me from Rosie will be a great treasure: I can understand why she did not send it to you

directly; she thought that she could conceal to whom it was addressed; and while she loved *you*, it seems to me that at times she avoided anything that might bind *you* to *her*. . . . Probably she had a presentiment of the shadow that hung over her and whoever loved her.

I have not another minute today, so good-bye until tomorrow, with love from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,

April 10, 1886.

Darlingest *Mamma*:

Snow clouds just clearing gloriously off the entirely blanched mountains.

I am doing really good work in all directions. Just now I am finishing a chapter of *Proserpina*—Book V—on Cork:—a chapter of our Fathers on St. Patrick and St. Columba, which involves the whole history of St. Germain of Auxere. I am writing a paper for schools on the crystallization of the native metals, collecting my scattered writings on Education, and going on with *Praeterita*,¹ under the terror of dying before I've got the best of it done.

¹ Mrs. Alexander and Francesca were intensely interested in *Praeterita*, as it consisted of Mr. Ruskin's personal reminiscences. He sent them each number as soon as it was published.

I'm very well and sleeping well, but bothered rather by a swimming of the eyes when I'm at all tired. General rage at politics, if I get hold of a paper, and correspondence with inevitable nuisances of people—or two or three friends who *must* not be neglected—take up every morn till eve. . . .”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
May 2nd, 1886.

Sweetest and dearest Sorel:

I can answer only one little bit of the lovely chat today. ‘Perhaps you do not mean anything in earnest, except to puzzle me!’ My darling, how could you think, or be on the edge of thinking, *that* of your poor fratel! I never write one word to you but in the deepest earnest,—down to the Earth’s deepest and Heaven’s nearest—earnest; but I write in playful words often because it won’t go into any others, and often to keep you from being hurt. What I said of ‘my own thoughts about *Mammina*’ she will partly understand from my question in yesterday’s letter. Shortly, I mean that there are people whom Christ lets see Him and be with Him; and others who never see Him all their lives and who are not meant to, nor to pray, nor to hope, but to live like the ravens, as I said.

I have prayed many and many a day. But I never got the *things* I wanted, sometimes the

help or relief, but never *things*. But I can't write more. I have such a lovely letter from my Grannie, so pleased by my saying in *Praeterita* how pretty she was at eighteen. How I do wish I had made a drawing of Grannie when she was fifty! She was quite lovely still—then. But now, she has suffered too much.

How you do tantalize me about Silvia!

Ever your poor tormented

Fratel."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
May 8, 1886.

Darling Sorel:

You don't think I thought you'd read *Mamma's* letters when I altered Miss to Mrs.? It was only that she might open the envelope if you were out. I've been having no luck with her. I asked her if she could tell me anything wrong she ever did in her life. I knew she wouldn't.

As for poor me, my Sorel, I'm a Turk, and a Greek, and a Roman, and a Brahmin, and a Buddhist. It's no use thinking about me except in those verses I sent you yesterday, written out indecipherably by Grannie, copied by Diddie. But, Sorel, dear, you and *Mamma* mustn't go taking everybody for granted who say they're my friends. At least I could count my friends on my fingers. The people that say they are, are mere acquaintances. When any of my friends are coming to see you, I'll tell you before.

Please give my love to Mr. Newman, who *is* a friend, if he'd only paint with the rational number of colours.

I'm very miserable just now—the fading away of all one's old powers is too bad sometimes. I can't dig. I can't pickaxe. I mustn't wade. I get out of breath climbing hills. I had some asparagus yesterday and didn't care for the taste of it. I don't know what to do with myself in the evening, and when it's five in the morning I wish it were six.

Ever your poor old
Fratel."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

"Florence,
Di 14 Maggio, 1886.

Mio caro Fratello:

Here at last I have found time to sit down and write you my thanks, a little better than yesterday, I hope, for your beautiful present. The reproductions of your drawings are lovely; to me, so much better than any engraving can be, giving every touch as you made it; and the pictures themselves are so very beautiful! As I look at them, it seems to me that each in turn is the one I like best. *Mamma* seems to admire the Chamouni one the most, looking straight up the side of a mountain into the clouds! And I suppose that *is* rather the most *impossible*; but

I was especially charmed with the view of Amalfi, which I have never seen but feel now as if I had; and perhaps even more with the Madonna della Spina, that I saw in its beauty, and that nobody will ever see again! But I suppose it is natural that the Italian views should be those that take the greatest hold of me. (You see that I have no scruple about saying what I like best: I am not at all like an English lady who came to see me the other day—a shy, gentle, delicate-looking lady, not young, who talked about her pleasure in seeing the pictures here; and I unfortunately asked her who among the old masters were her especial favourites. She blushed, hesitated, and finally asked timidly: ‘Do you like Perugino?’ I assured her that I did; at which she appeared relieved, and said: ‘I am *so glad* you like him, because *I* do!’ *Fratello*, I have learned by long practice to keep my countenance through almost anything, but there was something so unspeakably droll in the idea of my patronizing Perugino that it was really too much for me!) But to return to what I was saying—That *Madonna della Spina*¹ goes

¹ The little chapel of Santa Maria della Spina in Pisa. Ruskin was very fond of this little chapel before its restoration. It was built in 1230 for sailors about to go to sea and was supposed to contain a piece of the crown of thorns. Ruskin mentions it several times in *Praeterita* and writes in Volume II, in connection with visiting Pisa, “I drew the Spina chapel, with the Ponte a Mare beyond, very usefully and well.” Sir Thomas Graham Jackson in his “Gothic Architecture in France, England and Italy,” mentions the chapel as having been lately restored, and writes, “In spite of many beautiful details the design has in excess the redundancy of ornament into which Italian Gothic fell.”

the most to my heart of all partly from the melancholy interest attached to it, as a lovely shadow of what exists no longer, partly because I have felt so much all that you have written about it; and much for its wonderful representation of what it would seem to me impossible to represent at all. (But why do you always speak so slightly in the *Praeterita* of your own drawing? Surely you must know that these are not things that any one could learn to do!) The view of the village under the snow-covered mountain (it looks like St. Fines) is strangely like a place near Bassano, and perhaps as beautiful as any. I can appreciate the way in which that mountain is drawn, perhaps all the better because I cannot do it myself and have tried so often and failed. The Aventine view is equally beautiful and truthful (according to my now far-away recollection); and only this minute I see that it bears the date 1841! You must have drawn it during that first visit to Rome of which I have just been reading and, after the way you have been writing about your early drawing, if I cared about being considered 'quite correct' I should not dare to say how much I admire it! The small pen drawings are beautiful also and wonderfully delicate; the clouds especially give me a great deal to think about.

As for my own S. Rosa, she rather raised me in my own conceit, by being much prettier than

I remembered the original: it was very kind in you to think of sending her to me. I am glad I have her, as she is a likeness of a little girl of whom I am very fond. But I must not say more, though there is much more that I want to say.

As for *Mamma*, she is entirely overpowered by your kindness and the beauty of the drawings, and does not know how to thank you any better than I do. She joins with me in love, and I remain as ever

Your affectionate and most grateful

Sorella.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
May 16, 1886.

Darlingest Sorel:

Your letters are just always the same delights to me, so you're not to waste penwoman-ship in saying they're not.

Yes, the whole gist and kernel and end and middle and four sides of *Fors* is just *that*—that great lords and ladies should be as Enrichetta is.

Some years since, one of our English upper-class girls married a Roman prince. She was staying at Broadlands, and I asked her how she was going to treat her people. ‘My people—what—up in the hills? Oh, the Prince dares not

go near them. They are all wretches and banditti. We shall live in Rome.'

I'm better these last two or three days, but alas shall never climb hills more. I begin to like lying in bed in the morning and looking out at the sun on them! But I do think when I'm the least careful that my *hand* is improving, with my Sorel lessoning me day by day.

Dear love to that *Mamma* the Unconfessing.

I am not sure you should let people talk in the room about you as you do. I think it must hurt your nerve, though you can't feel it.

Ever your lovingest

Fratel."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
Sunday (I'm really getting to like
it at last!!!)

May 23, 1886.

Darling Sorel:

I wrote yesterday—or was it the day before?—just to show you what a dreadful brother you'd got, which I know you hadn't the remotest guess of, and it's time you should; and please say to Ethel that I can see she's millions of miles prettier than that when she brushes her hair smooth and isn't cut out with scissors all round.

But the fact is, Sorel—and this is quite serious,—you mustn't waste the spirit that is in you by doing portraits except in pictures of emotional subject, or when there is strong emotion

about the person's life. Isabella is grand, Beatrice successful, Edwige lovely in the *Zita* subject, St. Christopher the grandest of all. But you *must* work under emotion.

Look up your legends of saints and form a consistent series to be illustrated. Or real history of good people, like the *Superiora*, and put all the Ethels into little Bethels.

Your friend Miss Lloyd has blazed out on me all at once like a tulip or an orange lily. I used to pooh-pooh and snub her awfully. But she's doing grand things now! It must be your shadow, or light, or mantle, or glove, or glance, or something of that sort on her. O dear, I wish you could bring out what's in *me* like that. There's such a lot that has never got out. (Besides the mischief.)

What a *horrid* nuisance it is to have to send my letters to a Bank! Can't you have a post office at some beautiful countess's or duchess's or saint's or Sybil's or *Superiora*'s or something of *that* sort?

. . . .”

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
Sunday, May 30, 1886.

Darling Sorel:

Yes, the letter comes to its moment and I answer on the moment to say I am so thankful you are with the swallows and near that girl who

sings *stornelli*, and in the care of Assunta and out of the way of ugly things, and to say that you are a foolish little Sorel to think you have done your best at Florence. The best will still be better, though you can't *much* better the great drawings of the *Songs*.

I am most thankful that you know how being among ugly things hurts the imagination, but there are some general principles for which you have to fix. And, as you so often tell *me*, you *must rest*—before you are tired, not after.

I fancy I am really better, but am getting hypochondriacal by living alone and finding myself fancying I can't stir foot or finger, when I can walk, or scrawl pretty fast, if anything stirs me to it. Can't scrawl more here, however, to-day. Only love to *Mamma* and to that girl who sings *stornelli*. And to the Swallows.

And I'm your lonely and sorrowful

Fratel."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 5, 1886.

. . . I was doubly delighted this morning—*Sorella mia preziosissima*—by seeing how much you wanted my letters, though they are such mere scrabbles and babbles. I've really had a nice day with your long letter saying you felt lonely for want of mine—and *it* came a day sooner than I expected,—and I've finished the

fifth *Praet*, rather prettily I think, and I've had a sunny drive to a waterfall where I'm going to direct the building of a foot-bridge at the bottom—plank and single rail—and I went by a hill-road where there's a family of children to open one gate. Joseph is the youngest, and then Annie, and Charlie, and Elizabeth, and Dinah—Dinah's about nine, Joseph three. I took five new sixpences in my pocket for them, and two books—Richter's child book and 'Dame Wiggins of The Cabbage Patch,' and I got two kisses from Dinah and Elizabeth.

Then I had a lovely tea in a small inn parlour, with door open to the road, and a very modest and gentle but extremely hungry dog, and then a saunter in afternoon sunshine among the rocks, feeling really quite well, and myself, though not active or boisterous. I brought home a tiresome water veronica though—which won't look up and behave.

Sunday. Yes, and I'm very much myself to-day, too, after a good sleep, and if that old letter's lost, I'll write you a better instead, but can't say more today for I've got some scraps and scrubs to send off to tiresome people by this post.

Your lovingest

Fratel."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence,
June 17, 1886.

Mio caro Fratello:

Your letter this morning (of the 13th) was a very great pleasure; and I only wish I had time to answer it quietly, for I have even more than usual that I want to say today! But we are just preparing to leave, and everything is in confusion, and I have much more than I can do and am interrupted all the time, and must write my letter all in fragments. As for your calling your letters *horrid*; I suppose I cannot help your saying so if you will; but I would strongly advise any one else not to use such words about them before me. And when you speak of my ‘heaps and bunches’ etc. of ‘loving friends,’ I can only say that I have only one *Fratello*. Not that I have so many friends either: of course, there are a good many people whom I like and who like me; but of the real, close friends who are a part of my life . . . You told me once that you could count yours on your fingers, and I could almost count mine on the fingers of one hand! And then you go on with a list of your sins towards me, which would make any one think who did not know the truth that I had a perfect ogre of a brother! And because it really seems to me that you are a little bit in earnest, you must let me remind you of what you seem to have forgotten. You say that you have ‘stolen’ the

Superiora and *S. Rosa*; but I gave you *S. Rosa* and asked you to make any use you could of the *Superiora*.¹ (You wanted me to sell it to you, for several times its value, but I would not.) And then you paid me the great honour of putting it in *Fors Clavigera*, with some beautiful remarks of your own; which I think came a little nearer turning my head than anything else that ever happened to me. As for the drawings which you think of sending me some day, I am very glad that Miss Kate Greenaway, or any of your other friends, should enjoy them first: they will be very precious and welcome to me when they come. And I am so *very* glad that you begin to feel like drawing something more! That seems as if you were really beginning to feel well, as in the old times. About *Polissena* . . . if you did not mind, I wish that you would leave her a little longer. At least I will tell you what I am thinking about. When I go to Bassano, where I hope we shall go in the autumn, for the cholera seems to be dying away, I am going to try to collect and write down all the particulars about that wonderful woman Catina da Rivolta,² whose children are still living in the neighbourhood, and to draw a sketch of the church that she built. And I am almost sure that you will want to print it; so, as it will be very short, why could you not

¹ The stories of the *Superiora* called the Mother of the Orphans.

² Catina da Rivolta in *Christ's Folk in the Apennine*.

put it with *Polissena*? At least, would it not be better to let *Polissena* wait until you see whether you like *Catina*? But this is only an idea of mine and you know best. You wrote to me a while ago that you were thinking of printing the *Superiora*, with the picture, in some separate form; but I did not understand quite what you meant. But it would not make a large book to put all the three little stories together; however, perhaps you have some different idea about them. If you can use any of them about anything that you are writing yourself, you know that I should be very thankful. When you think of all that you have done for me, in so many ways, I think you will understand what a great pleasure it is to me whenever anything that I do can be of the smallest help to you in your own work.

Love from *Mammina* as always, and from

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

“All’ Abetone,

Di 3 Agosto, 1886.

. . . You know angels have to be drawn from boys of sixteen or seventeen years old; and boys of that age, up here, besides being painfully shy and stiff, have a fashion of cutting their hair close to their heads so they look as if they wore black velvet skull caps; and they all smoke pipes,

and in consequence bring certain unusual odours into my little room, which perhaps I am rather too particular to have neat and nice.

We have just done with the annual festa here; and one man, who was in prison for a quarrel with the guards (the people here are always going to prison for such things, but he is a very good man) was let out so late that he could only arrive in the evening after the fair was over. He was not in a penitent state of mind, and informed me loftily that he had 'gone in with his honour and come out with his honour.' And he said that he would have *his* S. Leopoldo the next day; and in consequence lounged about all day doing nothing, in his Sunday clothes, and looked miserably tired in the evening. I think he was glad enough to put on his checked shirt and go to work today. He did not lose much though, with the festa; for there was hardly anything going on, and I am afraid that the cake and candy sold were not of the first quality. For I remember one day when I took a walk down through the village, and passed a man sitting on a bridge, with a basket of just such cake. He pressed me very hard to buy it, and when I declined, he said, 'But *nobody* buys it, and I have had nothing to eat all day!' I was sorry for the poor man, but I was a good way from home, and had no money, and I did not quite know what to do. So after thinking a minute, I said, 'Why do you not eat

some of the cake?' I did not mean to be impolite; but I wish you could have seen the look of mingled disgust, contempt and wounded dignity with which my suggestion was received! He answered loftily, '*I don't eat such stuff as that!*' Now, *Fratello*, I have been running on so long and I am afraid I have written too much; but now I *must* stop! You may imagine, it is not very easy to 'stop' after being obliged to stop for so long; but you will not be quite strong for some time, and if my letter should tire you, Joanie would not let me write again, who knows when!

Your affectionate

Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
Sunday, August, 1886.

Darling Sorel:

I have *Mamma's* letter about my illness and yours about angels, neither of you knowing much about the several topics. I am not going to say more of my illness than that it lost me the roses, bell heather, and fox-gloves; and of angels only this (which you ought to have known without being told, you absurd little Sorel! I've really no patience with you, for once). You can make an angel of any good and sensible man,

woman, boy, girl, or beast (as the four of Ezekiel) but you can't of a beastly boy who smokes. This is really the main thing I've to say to you, and it is very serious.

The pretty stories in your letters, above all the meeting of the two sibyls, are beyond even their usual loveliness, and of infinite value to me. I am going on with botany and natural history.

Ever your lovingest and gratefulest, and
Mamma's wilfullest

fratel and *figlio*, J. R."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
August 15, 1886.

Darlingest Sorel:

Your exquisite letter is the best of summer to me. We have had no summer here, but the sun I want is just what you give me—love, and trust, and sympathy. I am so alone now. As my strength returns, I find more and more use in my old diaries and drawings. The last half of the autobiography ought to be better than the first if I am yet spared to finish it, and get in order the drawings and books that belong to it.

I suppose you have my cross note about the smoking boys by this time!

Ever your naughty and vexatious

Fratel.

Dearest love to *Mamma*. I don't know how naughty *she* is, you know—she won't tell me!"

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
August 29, 1886.

Sorella carissima, and *dilettissima*, and delightfullestest, I don't know quite, or at all, how to put that last word into Italian and I don't clearly know what *dilettissima* means, or if it means anything; only it can't possibly mean too much—you never did write me such a delicious letter as this about Polissena¹ and her horse, with the comforting bits about myself, both your sayings and *Mamma's*; and I'm going to church upon it. But the day was a dilett- and elet-tissima one altogether. I had my little shepherdess carrying wood for me in the morning, and then Violet, whose birthday it was, asking me in the most flattering way to come to her tea, with birthday cake for me to help her to cut, and then before tea I was wood-cutting again, and gathered her a lovely cluster of nuts, and rhymed a little rhyme on them for her. *I* can't write rispetti, but this was my little rhyme:

Dear Violet, for your birthday's good
I graft a moral on my wood,
That Life with all its 'Ifs' and 'Buts'
Is first like almonds, then like nuts.
In early spring we can't but think
Its blossoms will be always pink.
Then—when the dainty colour's lacking
Its lessons need sagacious cracking.
Wise Violets, from their rough externals
Educe, with care, the sweetest kernels.

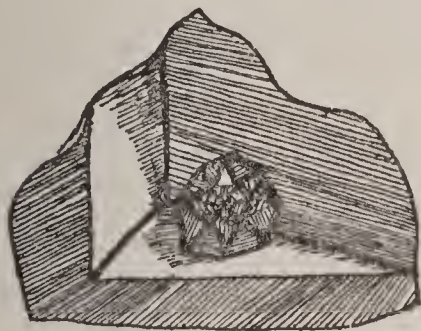
¹ From *The Peace of Polissena. Christ's Folk in the Apennine.*

Then I went and dressed! and put a bouquet of pansies in my buttonhole, Violet dancing all the while outside the door. So when I came out, she partly pulled and partly fascinated me all the way upstairs to the nursery, where all the beauty of Brantwood was at its brightest: Lily, a little subdued in her print frock that she might not rival Violet, but Baby, who is Violet's coadjutor and abettor in all things, considering it his birthday as much as hers, and in a state of Triumph and Superintendence of all things—marvellous to behold.

The two boys are really very beautiful, too, in their entire sweetness of disposition and activity of every atom and fibre in soul and body. Joanie was—what *you* may fancy—as she looked at them all. Clennie, Mistress of the room and its duties and delights, and hostess of the feast, gave me for once welcome—and even a smile.

I held Violet's hand to cut the cake, which was garlanded with pansies. It had been sent down for the birthday by my chief college pupil and friend and editor, Alec Wedderburn, who never forgets the children. It was an entirely rational cake, and wholesome, and nobody felt wicked in asking or giving another slice. The sun shone in at the large windows, and lighted a piece of rainbow-coloured stone, half violet, half orange-rose (you have that colour in the Apennine rainbows, as we in Coniston ones?) which I had brought for a present to Violet, with four other stones of

festive character for her to give her sister and brothers. Baby's was a baby crystal with a house of its own, which it usually lived in, like this:



and Baby was unlimitedly delighted with it.

When I came down again to my lonely study, I found your letter! and read the story of the horse to Joan and Clennie and Did-die in the evening. And for good-night—behold, there came a pretty coloured photograph of the rose queen of the Irish school!

And—I am at the end of my paper, for once, and all I've really to say must be said tomorrow.

Mamma and your most thankful

J. R."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 10, 1886.

Sweetest Sorel:

I have been reading *Catina* to my own little woodgirl—with help in it for both of us. I want it ever so much more than she, for I'm in an extremely dismal and restless state just now, and ought to be brought into a better mind by *Catina*. A real *Catina* would do it as fast as she liked, but I can't *Catina myself*.

I am resolved to bring out *Polissena* and *Catina* and some more of those stories for Christmas, and to give up everything for them

till I see them safe. I've sent *Catina* to my god-daughter to copy at once.

Dearest love to *Mamma*. Perhaps you and she will have to come to look after me in the spring.

Your lovingest Fratel."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 21, 1886.

Sweetest Sorel:

I've been reading your lovely letters over again all the sunny morning—about Enrichetta and Rosita and the homely count and countess who frightened the nameless Englishman into the corner and then thought he had looked down on their homeliness, and poor Boni going back to Venice from the long hoped German tour.

And I never give up anything, nor go into any misery, nor run any danger that I can help, and I'm so ashamed of myself. How my *Mamma* and *Sorella* can care for me the least bit I *can't* think.

Now here the new Sunday one with the lovely account of the King and Queen. I am so thankful; Heaven keep them both. And the pretty story of Guido. And *Mamma's* was lovely yesterday.

And I am *very* thankful for both of you, and will try to keep what you give me of hope—through whatever troubles me.

Ever your lovingest *Fratello."*

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 28, 1886.

Sweetest Sorel:

I am comforted—in the depth of various discomfiture and despair!—by having your letters to read over, and the extreme gladness of knowing that I may do what I want with them without displeasing you. Of course, when I get the gatherings into slip, they shall be sent to you that you may cancel whatever you see to be possibly harmful. There will be plenty of exquisite material.

Mamma has been writing me such lovely letters and patting and saying good day to me till I'm regularly walking on my hind legs. But the things you wonder I say of myself are deeply true for all that. I thought to have lived a grand, monkish, benevolently cheerful life, and here I am at 67 . . .

Ever your poor little

Fratel.”

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
November 30, 1886.

Darlingest Sorel:

Yes, the ‘Ned’ letter is Burne-Jones, whose faults and virtues do justly bring on him praise and blame both warm and bitter. I send you today a present of a good photograph from his drawing of Miss Gladstone, by which you will be able to judge of his character and power but,

alas, not of his colour. I must try to get his daughter to send me a bit for you.

I hope this writing is bad enough, I have done rather a lot today; a nice little preface to *Polis-sena* to begin with, and a lot of more or less pathetic or prettyish ones besides (letters, not prefaces).

I'm a little better today though, for bright sun and north wind, and ever your ownest

Fratel.

Please, for once I must send you friends to call on you.

J. M. Rooke and his excellent and submissive wife are coming to Florence almost immediately, he to draw things for me and see what is left of all that I loved and that he will love. You will find him modest, tender, and intelligent in the deepest, deepest degree. You will rejoice in his work, and you will confer all grace on me as well as on him in every little piece of household advice or other help that you and *Mammina* give him, or his”

Mr. Ruskin to Mrs. Alexander:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
December 22, 1886.

Darlingest Mamie:

I've just got your loveliest note. I've written a little exercise for my shepherdess which I rather like. Here's a fair copy of it. I

didn't do it to any words, but if you like, you know, you may get any one to sing 'Fare thee well and if forever,' etc., to it.

Ever your lovingest

Figlio."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
December 27, 1886.

Darlingest *Mamma*:

But it's too cruel of you not to pity me because I wrote the song of the Isle of Skye! If you only heard the tune in B-flat, I'm sure your heart would be melted! I'm putting in a few more pathetic words before I send it to you, but here are the words, complete (over page).

Aggie is another pretty girl, just eighteen, much slighter than C., and a lovely tennis player, who lives usually at the Crook of Lune. But she's gone to Germany just now. Jane, Anne, and some of the schoolgirls I have now regularly to learn anything they like to on Saturday afternoons, and then I let them lay the cloth and give themselves tea in my study.

Dear love to Sorel; her letter is so precious to me just now, to fill in with the new bit of Paolina at the end of the story of Catina,¹ which I give in next number under the title '*Pensatevi Voi.*'

Ever your lovingest

Figlio."

¹ *Christ's Folk in the Apennine.*

“In the Isle of Skye
 The girls are shy
 And out of tune
 By the Crook of Lune
 And they can't tell why,
 But the balls go awry
 And they can't play tennis
 —Neither Aggie, nor Clennies—
 With the Stones of Venice
 A-standing by.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence, February 3, 1887.

Mio caro Fratello:

It was a great comfort to receive your kind letter, just when I was not expecting it, with such good news of you. I have had a short but very friendly letter from Sig. Boni, who is happy because some English society is going to publish his work on the *Cad'oro*; and he is preparing now a book that I think will be very interesting, a *reconstruction* of Venice as it must have been in the fifteenth century, with a plan of the city by Albert Durer. He sent me also his photograph, which a friend of his took without his leave or knowledge one day when he was superintending the photographing of a campanile . . . one of the best likenesses that ever I saw. Today it is rainy and gloomy, and I am glad of it, because it is the *Candelabra*, and if it rains to-day the winter is over. Not that I can complain

much of the winter this year, for I have tea-roses and hyacinths in blossom on the terrace in the open air, and my first crocus out two days ago. But people say that the open winter has not been healthy, and nearly all the children whom I know have been ill. Santa Rosa's little brother has been *very* ill, but is out of danger now. He is a very gay, bright little fellow, with wonderful black eyes; and he does not like at all having to lie still and take medicine. They gave him a little wooden gun to induce him to be quiet, and he was delighted with it and would keep it always in his bed. Yesterday he called his mother and told her that he wished she would load his gun.

She asked him what he wanted to do with it; and he replied, very seriously, 'I want to shoot the doctor!' I tell you this, thinking that you may possibly sympathize with him.

I was not able to finish this yesterday, and to-day I take up my pen while I am awaiting the visit of an English lady, of whom I do not even know the name, but she is staying in the same hotel with Marina, who has told her of your kindness to me (which poor dear Marina is always boasting of to everybody) and the good lady, who is one of your adorers, wishes to see me, with, I suppose, an idea that I shall have some reflected lustre about me; and in anticipation I am feeling quite sorry for her disappointment.

I had almost forgotten to tell you that Bishop Potter from America has been to Florence and astonished everybody by preaching on the story of Ida! Ethel Bronson lent it to him one Saturday, and the next day he made it the subject of a sermon. I was not there, but was pleased when I heard of the honour paid to my friend.

I have been interrupted by *such* a succession of visitors! For the proverb came true, and the spring really seems to be upon us all at once to-day, so everybody is out of doors. One brought me a lovely bunch of lilies-of-the-valley (my favourite flowers, because they grew in my grandmother's garden under her window) and another, a stranger, has carried off (in a state of wild enthusiasm) a very unfinished sketch of S. Rosa's head, because she says it has eyes 'like her blessed Harry,' whoever he may be. I have barely time now to wish you every blessing and happiness for your birthday, now close at hand.

I think it finds you better and stronger than the same day last year; and I hope and pray, as does *Mamma*, that it may be the beginning of a healthy, peaceful, and happy year to you. Love from us both.

Ever your affectionate

Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
February 7, 1887.

Sweetest Sorel:

Only time to thank you for the story of St. Rosa's brother and to tell you my snowdrops are out, and I'm no good for letters or books or anything. The day is dazzling, gold-coloured mountains and blue lake with the sort of breeze on it that stays for an hour in the middle of it and never gets to the shore; or stays under the shore and never gets to the middle. And Catina isn't out yet, but I shall get it done this week, I trust.

I'm still keeping well, and Miss Greenaway is here now and very restive about everything I want her to do, which keeps me in my own proper contradictory element.

Your *Fratello*."

“Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
February 20, 1887.

Sweetest Sorel:

It is so nice you like my letters, and would miss them, but it does so puzzle me. We were both of us born to be puzzled, it seems. There's scarcely ever anything in my letters but a scrawled grumble! But my birthday was very nice. I have a quantity of pleasures every day, if I could only be content. You see, the mischief

of it is that I've lost all hope of the next world, feeling that I've had more than I deserve, infinitely more, in this one.

Meantime, I am still of some use certainly, but I am ashamed of the failure of all my great plans and the overestimate of my own powers.

Your poor

Fratello."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence, April 21, 1887.

. . . I wrote you of the Sette Comuni and of its beautiful city of Marostica. But I have not yet told you anything about the Madonna, how she is loved, and what a place she holds in the hearts of my Asiago friends. Gallio has its Madonna, too; noted for her diamond brooch and earrings, which were vowed to her by a rich gentleman of the town during the illness of his son. It was said that he promised her these ornaments in the event of his son's recovery. The boy died; but he gave her the jewels all the same. I have told you, I think, that the Gallio and Asiago people are none too friendly. There is a very narrow bridge, over a very narrow brook, which marks the division line between the two states; and nobody on one side of the bridge will marry any one on the other, and even the *language* is said to be somewhat different. I am sorry to say that the rivalry extends even to the

Madonnas! Now, as I said before, when we went to Asiago there was great suffering from drought; and, as one week after another passed and no rain came, things grew more serious. Fountain after fountain dried, and each day the stream at the great fountain in the Piazza grew less, and the women had to wait longer before their pitchers were filled. In the distant pastures, away among the mountains, water had failed almost entirely . . . the herdsmen, so people said, drank *nothing* but a little milk that they might save all the water for their precious cattle! The Sette Comuni people, like Catina, think to accomplish everything by prayer; and the services in church were incessant. Processions were constantly passing, for the most part at night, chanting litanies in sad voices; the light of their torches flashing up on my ceiling as they went by. Even the children caught the general feeling and had little processions of their own, with a small wooden Madonna and a cross and banners of cut paper made by themselves; chanting with a solemnity that showed it was by no means play, but very grave reality to them. At length it was resolved that the whole population should go in procession, and carry the Madonna in solemn state to pay a visit to the Gallio Madonna. It was confidently expected that the weather would change immediately afterwards. And so Asiago was pretty much deserted that night.

Men and women, boys and girls, priests and people, all assembled at the church; and the Madonna, seated in an armchair, was borne on the shoulders of some of the principal men, all the way to Gallio. The next day everybody was looking for clouds. People's hearts almost failed, and no one could help feeling the general sadness. But one remedy still remained; and one of those hot, cloudless nights, another long procession of bareheaded men and white-veiled women came over the road from Gallio, bearing the Gallio Madonna . . . come to return the Asiago Madonna's visit! And the next morning there were a few white clouds over the blue. Everybody was out in the road, or at the windows, watching those clouds in breathless anxiety . . . and before night, the rain was pouring down like a flood, on city and country; and the terrible visitation of the drought was over! There were great rejoicings; not, however, unmixed with mortification on the part of the Asiago people, that the blessing should have been sent in favour to the Gallio Madonna instead of theirs. So the remainder of our stay in the country was much pleasanter than the first part had been: the fields grew green and were sprinkled with flowers.

I don't know whether to be glad or sorry that you are so busy. I am thankful that you feel like working, but always fear lest you should do too much, especially when you are alone. I heard



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MADONNA AND CHILD

From "Tuscan Songs"

of you the other day in an unexpected quarter. A friend of mine went to Assisi, and the sacristan at the church there did nothing but talk about you, with the greatest affection, and showed her your portrait, which he keeps in the *sagrestia*.

Florence is all excitement now about the festas in May for the completion of the Duomo: the King and Queen are coming, and the streets (they say) are all to be dressed with flowers, in honour of Santa Maria del Fiore. I only hope the new front may be worthy of the rest, but that will be difficult.

Those famous columbines are all bursting out on the terrace . . . and the bees seem to think they have the first right in them, and give manifest signs that I am not wanted, whenever I go out for a look. They remind me of Edwige's very dignified and moderate reproof of the flies, one hot day, when they kept buzzing into her face and eyes so that she could hardly go on with her knitting. 'Poor things! one sees that they have not a shadow of education!'

But I must end this, only hoping that you will have patience to read it; and next week we will have one of the usual gossips of more reasonable length. Meanwhile, love, as ever, from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate

Sorella."

“Di 18 Maggio, 1887.

Mio caro Fratello:

Here is another week gone by, in which little has been accomplished . . . a week of confusion and noise, all Florence gone wild, nobody to attend to anything, and people coming in from all parts of the country! Every railroad arrival brought in a perfect river of people; and where they went, or how provisions were found for them is to me a mystery. It has all been very grand; but I am glad that tomorrow is the last day. People said that the *Corso* of flowers was as lovely as anything could be, but I did not go to see it. I only saw some of the people coming away from it, with horses and carriages entwined with garlands. I have not been to see anything, excepting the front of the *Duomo*; but the *passeggiata storica* went by here, and was much more beautiful than I had ever imagined possible. *Mamma* wrote you all about it; so I will only say that I never had any idea before how very unbecoming the present style of dress is. I wonder what people wear it for! I had always supposed that people were better looking in old times than now; but these Florentines of the present day, in their ancient dresses, were as handsome as any of the old pictures. Not only the representatives of great families, in their rich brocades and magnificent armor, but those of the poorer sort—for all the trades were represented: carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, etc.,

each trade with its appropriate banner, and dresses copied from pictures of the fourteenth century and worn by people of the same calling. No wonder people could paint grand pictures in those times! The King and Queen went to Lucca for one day, and were fairly overpowered by the affection of the people. People said that they saw the King in tears, twice over. They had only a few hours to see everything; but contrived to make one long visit, and that was at the hospital, where they stayed a great while, talking with the sick people, and distributing money. All the contadini came down from the mountains, and were so wild in their enthusiasm that some of them were near losing their lives; for they sprang up on to the outside of the car when the King and Queen were going away, and held on for some time without minding the entreaties of the guards, who saw their danger!

I do think you will laugh when you know what happened to me this morning. A package was brought me by the post, from the office of a weekly newspaper in New York, which contained nothing less than a printed biographical notice of *myself*! All a romance, from beginning to end, and of the most poetical description. I learn, to my great astonishment, that I am Italian born, but of an English mother, that I live in a stone palace, up seven flights of stairs, that my 'studio' is hung with ancient tapestries, that I have blue eyes, that Edwige (described as

a 'rosy peasant' sitting perpetually on the landing place outside of my door among the flowers and canaries) is my *nurse*! And much more equally valuable information. A model, whom the writer professes to have met in my room, by name, Tessa, is a pure invention; and I am told that she carried a half-naked baby, which, *at a sign from me*, she laid down on the carpet. I hope I don't treat poor little babies like *that*, when they are brought to see me! And then the view from my windows! It combined Fiesole and the Arno (in two opposite directions, and I don't see either of them!).

I hardly know how to write intelligibly today, for since it is the *Ascension*, and *gran festa*, my room has been constantly full of company, speaking different languages at the same time, all strangers to each other and all expecting a great deal of attention. So you must excuse all mistakes. Good-bye. Love from *Mamma* and
 Yours affectionately,
Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
 May 22, 1887.

Sweetest and dearest of Sorels:

Verily, I am in strong, stern, rapidly but securely working energy in every necessary way, and receiving lessons every hour which gather

into focus my former work and life. I keep steady on the chapter of *Praeterita*, *La Grande Chartreuse*, and am happy among imagined Alps.

Your account of the King and Queen at Lucca is really the most delicious thing for me personally (loving Lucca as I do) you ever wrote to me. The Last Chapter of *Praeterita* is to be the Hills of Carraca, and this letter shall be the best, D. V.

Dear love to that angelic but *too* easily taken in *Mamma*, and I'm your comforted

Fratello.

So proud of his sister."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 11, 1887.

Sweetest Sorel:

I can walk farther than last year, and have lately had lovely weather for the hills and brooks.

A true friend, and of long standing, Mrs. Firth of Ambleside, who has lately lost her aged and deeply cherished mother, is therefore able to come and stay at Brantwood and help me in all manner of ways. I was very nearly asking *Mamma* and you to come the other day! Would you, by any chance, *like* to come and see Brantwood while its Master can yet show you the glades of it? It might be an interpretation

of us to each other, such as all our writing could never be!

I can't write more today, except only to thank you from my innermost heart for allowing me to copy and print the pieces of your letters which tell so much of what is dearest to you.

Dear love to *Mamma*.

Ever your endlessly grateful

Fratello.

This is by way of answer to your St. Christopher letter received today! It is full of benediction to me. What you say of the mosaics, so precious, and please give my deep love and thanks to Signor Bortolo, and in good time to the priest who translated *Pensatevi Voi*. I never understand what the *vi* is myself."

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
June 19, 1887.

Sweetest Sorel:

In yesterday's writing I had no word for the goodness to me of all that Signor Boni is doing. I got his '*Miracoli*' the day before yesterday. He knows I am with him in all he thinks and contends for, and that his own personal success and happiness and fame (I fear he does not enough know this) are indeed more to me than any confirmation given to my own work. For indeed you have taught me how I missed the

true life and glory of Italy today, while I stumbled among her tombs.

Ever your poor
Fratel.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Venezia, Di 25 Giugno, 1887.

Mio caro Fratello:

I thank you a thousand times for your kind words about my dear Angelina: all that I said about her is true, and a great deal more; and if you print her story, I think there would be no harm in giving her whole name: Angelina Puccio: it would please a great many in Florence who loved her, and it would be a comfort to her husband that you should pay such honour to her memory. But *please* do not say such words to me as (I am ashamed to repeat it!) that you wonder at my taking you for *Fratello*! There are some things I don't like to hear, even from you.

I was interrupted just here by a visit from the future Mrs. Carloforti, with her mother and sister. I think you would have been edified to hear their conversation about you. You know Venetians have a way of expressing themselves warmly. The old lady says that you are a saint, and people ought to cut your coat into little pieces and wear them for relics.

The truth is, your letter came too late for me to answer it today, and now I can only send you

love from *Mamma*, and the same from your affectionate

Sorella.”

“Florence, December 22, 1887.

Mio caro Fratello:

All this day I have been trying to find a moment to sit down and write to you; and all day long it has been one procession in and out of my room. . . . Contadine friends with Christmas presents of fruit and flowers, children who have learned Christmas hymns, and come to recite them, the *procaccio* from Abetone with a basket of chestnuts and the usual bag of chestnut flour from Polissena . . . and finally a lady who wished to buy a portrait of Paolina to make a present to somebody else. And I have laid my hands on all the available dishes and baskets in the house, and my room is a singular combination of gaiety and disorder; but at last they have left me alone, and I can sit down, very tired and very happy, to think over your letter of this morning. But it is almost evening now, so I shall have to leave most of what I want to say until tomorrow. Only I cannot let the day end without saying how very thankful I am for all the good news! I said in my last that I hoped we might have a blessed Christmas; and now it seems to be coming very full of blessings.

Fratello, it will be indeed a very great pleasure if I can see you once again! I had quite

given up the hope, though never the wish; and I have wished it all the more because when I saw you five years ago I did not know you as I do now, and could only half enjoy your visit, being foolishly frightened and confused. How little I thought, for a moment, that it was possible I might 'repent' of having you for my *Fratello*? You have always been so good to me! And even if you had been different, it would have been all the same; for I cannot change towards my friends, once they are my friends, even if I wanted to . . . and I never *do* want to! I suppose you must mean because you have been ill, and in trouble sometimes . . . at least, I cannot think what else you mean . . . but, do you not know that those have been the very times when I have cared most for being *Sorella*? Do you know, just at first, when I was rather slow about taking up that name, I was a little afraid that *you* might repent; because I knew that you thought me a great deal better than I was, and I was afraid when you found out . . . Well, never mind; you will never change your mind now any more than I shall. But I wish Joanie and her family would come into Italy, too; I should so like to see them! Especially Joanie, who has been so kind to me; and as yet I know her only by letter, though she is so dear a friend!

Giannina wishes very much to see you, and always tells me to send you her *saluti*, and ask you to pray for her poor husband.

and to know; and so much to answer that I do not know where to begin! But first of all I want to thank you for calling me Sister in English, which I somehow feel means more to you than the same word in Italian: and if the English for Brother had more reality to me than the Italian, I would use it, too; but Italian is in some ways more my language than English, and '*Fratello*' seems to come to me more naturally. But I will call you anything you please. . . . Nothing can ever make it any more (or less) real to me!

And now I want to tell you that spring has turned the corner and today I have the first purple anemones, also *piedigallo* and daisies! Only think . . . the eleventh of January, and after all that snow! I don't know what you call *piedigallo* in English, but I think it is a sort of aconite: it is yellow and has a dark stem, and a delicate honey perfume, and grows in clusters close to the ground, and the blossoms come up before the leaves. Stay . . . here is one . . . you will (I hope) know what I mean! This was sent me yesterday, with some others, by an invalid lady whom I never saw. But she had been reading the *Roadside Songs* and understood, by my drawings of flowers, how much I cared for them, and so sent me her very first spring flowers! And I felt her kindness so much that I could not help telling you. Your letters seemed sad to me, but I hope it was only because you had been reading over poor Rosie's letters.

Of course I have always understood that none of the others could ever make her loss good to you; but you would not want them to, would you? I think if we could ever forget our treasures in Heaven or fill up their places here with anything earthly, that would be a greater loss than when they died. (And if the world cannot make us forget *them*, it is not likely that Heaven makes them forget us.) But we can be thankful for what we have left to brighten our journey to its end, and the good Lord always leaves us *something*. You have Joanie, and her children. I doubt if you ever quite knew yourself how dear she was to you, until she was ill last year. One finds out, at such times, just what our friends are to us; as I have had proof in my own life, only too often!

You were very kind to write so large, for the sake of my eyes; but I never have any trouble in reading your writing; and, besides, my eyes are really very well now. As soon as the days are a little longer, and warm enough to have the windows open (which will be very soon now) I am going to try my drawing again. No wonder you cannot imitate 'cloud lace,' to say nothing of the flowers and jewels of that country; but your works represent it to me, as closely as it can be represented.

Good-bye for now! *Mamma* sends love and the same as ever from your affectionate

Sorella."

Edwige brought me so many flowers this morning. . . . She came in the omnibus because it rained, and the conductor asked her to give him a bit of sweet geranium 'for good luck.' He said, 'Somebody gave me a sprig yesterday, and I had seventy centesimi in presents in the course of the day; and that is *something*, for the children.'

And here is another friend and more flowers . . . it is no use, I must stop! And I had not half finished answering your letter! But I *must* thank you for painting skies for me! You know already how much I care for them; only pray do not work too hard, just as you are beginning to be strong. And I am thankful that *Praeterita* is going on, and I should like to thank you, if I knew how, for your kindness in carrying on that and the stories of my poor friends together.

I wish you every possible blessing for Christmas, the Peace of God first, and then good health, and good news from every one whom you love (which I have come to look on as the greatest of earthly blessings) and success in all that you try to do for others; and if you can think of anything else to wish for, I hope it may come to you.

Love from *Mamma* and from your affectionate and happy

Sorella."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Sunday, 8th, Jan., —88.

Dearest Sister:

I use the English word for greater clearness and because I am so thankful you liked my New Year's letter and that I am a brother who can make you happy with even his weary and broken words.

Mamma's letter yesterday was most comforting to me in saying that she is pleased with me for giving up all for Joanie's sake, and in saying that you and she both knew how I suffered when she was ill. Yes—that *was* the worst time of all my life.

My Sorel and *Mamma* may like to see enclosed labels for British Museum. They can't have the stones if they don't allow labels. The diamond cost me £1000, but of course is fine only as a Museum specimen. The ruby cost me only £100, but is I believe the finest known, in native crystal, in Europe. The rose-fluors cost me £6, but are also unmatched.

Ever your lovingest
Fratel.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence, Di 12 Gennaio, 1888.

Mio caro Fratello:

Your letter this morning came to give me a happy day, full of all that I most cared to read

and to know; and so much to answer that I do not know where to begin! But first of all I want to thank you for calling me Sister in English, which I somehow feel means more to you than the same word in Italian: and if the English for Brother had more reality to me than the Italian, I would use it, too; but Italian is in some ways more my language than English, and '*Fratello*' seems to come to me more naturally. But I will call you anything you please. . . . Nothing can ever make it any more (or less) real to me!

And now I want to tell you that spring has turned the corner and today I have the first purple anemones, also *piedigallo* and daisies! Only think . . . the eleventh of January, and after all that snow! I don't know what you call *piedigallo* in English, but I think it is a sort of aconite: it is yellow and has a dark stem, and a delicate honey perfume, and grows in clusters close to the ground, and the blossoms come up before the leaves. Stay . . . here is one . . . you will (I hope) know what I mean! This was sent me yesterday, with some others, by an invalid lady whom I never saw. But she had been reading the *Roadside Songs* and understood, by my drawings of flowers, how much I cared for them, and so sent me her very first spring flowers! And I felt her kindness so much that I could not help telling you. Your letters seemed sad to me, but I hope it was only because you had been reading over poor Rosie's letters.

Of course I have always understood that none of the others could ever make her loss good to you; but you would not want them to, would you? I think if we could ever forget our treasures in Heaven or fill up their places here with anything earthly, that would be a greater loss than when they died. (And if the world cannot make us forget *them*, it is not likely that Heaven makes them forget us.) But we can be thankful for what we have left to brighten our journey to its end, and the good Lord always leaves us *something*. You have Joanie, and her children. I doubt if you ever quite knew yourself how dear she was to you, until she was ill last year. One finds out, at such times, just what our friends are to us; as I have had proof in my own life, only too often!

You were very kind to write so large, for the sake of my eyes; but I never have any trouble in reading your writing; and, besides, my eyes are really very well now. As soon as the days are a little longer, and warm enough to have the windows open (which will be very soon now) I am going to try my drawing again. No wonder you cannot imitate 'cloud lace,' to say nothing of the flowers and jewels of that country; but your works represent it to me, as closely as it can be represented.

Good-bye for now! *Mamma* sends love and the same as ever from your affectionate

Sorella."

“Florence, February 9, 1888.

Mio caro Fratello:

As I begin my letter to you today, I am reminded that it is your birthday! I hope that you are passing it happily, with Joanie to keep you company, and letters from all the people you care about, and my Florentine anemones on the table to remind you that Spring is walking very fast northward now and will soon be, I hope, in England. Sig. Bortolo Zanchetta is here, making us a visit of a few days, and has been telling us a great deal about our friends in Bassano.

Silvia wrote me last week that she and her mother were coming here for a few days; but I have heard no more about it, and am hoping all the time to see them appear.

I was not able to finish this letter yesterday, and now take up my pen on Thursday—*Berlingaccio*—but I have not seen a mask this year excepting in the shop windows. However, I believe they are having a *corso* somewhere; and Sig. Bortolo has gone off to see it; he is almost up to Edwige in his love of sight-seeing!

It is a heavenly day and quite warm; but the hills are still white with snow, and shining against a perfectly clear sky; and the first hyacinth has blossomed on my terrace. There . . . I was just writing that sentence when two visitors came. And now I have not another minute, so good-bye, and love from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate *Sorella*.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Sandgate, February 19, 1888.

Darling Sorel:

How accurately and surely you hit your day, in defiance of callers and contadini and foolish people and forlorn. More forlorn than your Fratel it would be difficult to find today under the gray sky of England, unbroken gray since morning. And now it's tea time, snowing wet snow in shivery thaw, and I can't read and can't think and can't walk about and can't rest in an armchair. And this after having such lovely letters as were on the breakfast table this morning: yours and Joanie's.

Anyhow—I can give my Sorel the promise she wants, that I'll tell her everything that troubles me; but when I've nothing to trouble me and yet am a mere sackful of troubles, what is my Sorel to do with me? I declare, today the only way I can amuse myself is by letting the fire nearly out, and then cossetting it in again! *One* trouble my Sorel certainly should not have about me—putting up with cross-examinations about me.

I think you should simply say when enquiries take that direction that you could not accept my confidence, either about my health or work, but on the condition of answering no questions. And as for people who look at you with that expression of distrust, I think you should immedi-

ately tell them you had no more time at their disposal.

I am delighted with the first of Giannina's pets and can quite believe anything of a partridge. Perhaps when I get—if I do get—fairly into my sea lodgings and out of this too luxurious hotel, I may take up with a sea-gull again. I should try to get them to come to the beach to be fed at a fixed hour, but fear, if I succeeded, that the street boys would come to throw stones at them, or the street loungers to shoot them.

Perhaps the most telling and tellable to begin with, of the sackful of troubles, is that I can't get any Chinese white to take points and edges sharp enough for the clouds I was trying to paint for you, and that all sunsets, however beautiful in the upper sky, are monotonous in a bank of smoke on the horizon. And I haven't seen a rainbow since I don't know when. But a place like this, where one stares right into the sun's face all day, is not exactly the sphere for them. Brantwood was the most rainbowy place I ever knew. . . .”

“Sandgate, February 26, 1888.

Darling Sorel:

You *have* had a time of it, poor dear, and I'm so sorry that Silvia went away again. Joan's coming down again next Thursday and I'm letting Miss Greenaway come with her on condition of her drawing me a flight of fairies

like sea-gulls round Shakespeare's cliff, and a whole Sandgate bay full of mermaids.

I'm so very glad and more than surprised to have that story of the swallows and sparrow from first hand, and from Giannina! of all first hands, the noblest. For the story itself has always been a favorite stock one in children's natural histories, and I never quite believed it. But now it's enough to make me begin collecting a children's bird book for a companion to *Christ's Folk*. I was greatly pleased with a trait of my G. D.'s parrot the other day. She has spoiled him so that he can always make her let him out of his cage when he likes; and the other day he 'liked' just as she was beginning a note to me. After watching her a minute or two with looks of disapproval, he laid hold of the top of the bit of note paper and tore it—on which G. D. says 'Polly' to him in her most solemn tone of rebuke. On which Polly replies instantly, 'What have you been doing?' . . ."

“Sandgate, March 4, 1888.

Dearest Sorel:

Your letter about Angelina's baptism in San Giovanina is *the* most precious you've sent me yet.

I am not merely better, but, as far as I can judge, so well as to be able to look forward with hope to starting for Chamouni on April 20th, Joanie's wedding day, with her husband and

daughter Lily. I must not look forward farther, yet, nor can I tell you or *Mamma* more to-night. Dearest love to her. Ever so much to Edwige, and please ask Giannina to send *me* a *little bit* of blessing, too, and I'm ever your lovingest

Fratel."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

"Florence, May 10, 1888.

Mio caro Fratello:

I am writing to you on *Ascension Day*, when, for some reason not known, I believe, even to themselves, the Florentines go out early in the morning to the *Cascine* to catch crickets (which unfortunate crickets are afterwards kept in little cages as long as they live . . . not long, usually!). And the room in which I am writing is just a garden of roses, for hardly any one comes to see me without a handful of them; and there are *hundreds* on the terrace! I hope—a little—that I shall have a quiet morning, and no visitors; as everybody is occupied between church and crickets; and that my letter will not be all broken up, as my letters have been for some weeks past. I have had the kindest of kind letters from dear Constance Oldham, telling me all about your visit to her, which she knew I should like to hear. It always gives me pleasure to hear of your being with her. But I do not

know where you are now, nor whether you ever received my last letter (which, however, had nothing particular in it) that I sent to Sandgate. I hope that this one may find you, somewhere.

Giannina, for the present, continues to grow better slowly and has begun to go out on her little terrace and look at her pinks and roses—a thing which she had not been able to do for many months. Today is the anniversary of what she considers one of the great events of her life—her first sight of the Italian flag in Tuscany. She has just been telling me about it. It was in '50—20 years ago!—the 10th of May; and she was coming from Bologna to Florence. Bologna was under papal rule then, supported by Austrian soldiers; but Florence had declared itself Italian for about a fortnight, though its fate was very doubtful. Before she left Bologna, some of the students had come to take leave of her, and had entreated her, secretly, to ask the Florentines to come and help them. She came away in the night by the diligence, for there was no railroad then; and her friends in their enthusiasm piled the carriage quite full of flowers. Just as the day was breaking, they (that is, herself, Mother and Brother Antonio) reached the frontier. I must tell the rest in her own words.

‘I can see it all now as if it were yesterday—that daybreak of the first of May! There before me sat an Austrian sentinel on a black horse: he

sat very still, covered with a white mantle that fell over the horse; and in the dim light he looked like a phantom. And beyond him, just across the hedge, I saw the Italian banner on a long pole rising against the sky. But I can never tell you what I felt when I saw, for the first time, the Italian colours! I went all out of myself, and as I passed near it, I stood up in the carriage and caught up as many flowers as I could hold in both arms and threw them at the foot of the flag-staff. There was a sentinel also on the Tuscan side, guarding the flag; and when I looked back I saw him jump over the hedge and gather up the flowers and go to tying them on to the staff. He was certainly a gentleman—not a rough person, for he had gentle feelings, and could understand what I had in my heart when I threw the flowers.’ I have not wished to change her words, but she meant that it was the first time she had seen the Italian flag since she was a little girl, when it was hung out on the campanile of Teramo during the few days of the constitution. Almost every day now she tells me some story, but I love especially to hear about her travels.

We shall be going in about three weeks, I think. *Mamma* wrote today to Venice to engage rooms. Good-bye, and love from us both.

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

“Beauvais, July 10, 1888.

Dearest Sorel:

I had still better evidence yesterday afternoon of my being on the way to better recovery than last year, as I was able to work satisfactorily for a couple of hours in the afternoon; part of the time standing on a ladder, and this morning I have been for three-quarters of an hour drawing, and for an hour climbing about the Cathedral in my old way. And there seems to me every probability that with due prudence, I may gradually make my way towards the Alps as I did in 1882, and that Joanie may have a happy time with me there either in the autumn or early next spring.

Your account of Carloforti relieved me from a grievous anxiety, for I had not been able to reply to his last letter. I have sent today, registered, a little present of fifty guineas, both to him and Amelia, with a note saying I hope they will be able to ascertain upon that what with due economy they will require in the future.

And the next thing I have on my mind is the continuation of *Christ's Folk*. I have the greater part of your letter with me, and as soon as I feel it safe to do a little serious work, will arrange the next number. The few words that will be needed to present the next number of *Christ's Folk* can be written in thankfulness.

The third matter on my mind is the final destination of the drawing of Ida. I am thinking of placing it at Girton College. Would you like it to be there?

Ever your gratefullest and loving
Fratel."

"Beauvais,
July 16, 1888.

Sweetest Sorel:

I must tell you before the day ends that I have your second happy letter and am thankful you are going to spare your eyes. But you must not think of oil painting. I have told you so before. You would attract every common and ignorant person about you and lose all your own essential gifts. No more of that tonight. I write to say how thankful I am for every word of the letters I copy, and how blessed they will be to others.

This place is especially good for me in its old French honesty. I was at the fruit market to-day and the way they gave me their word for things was as if Christ had been in their gardens with them, and blessed basket and stock; and they promised to have things ready for me to-morrow with such evident pleasure and dignity in being trusted that it was as if I had been among your basket women. . . ."

Ever your lovingest
Fratel."

“Hotel Maurice, Paris,
August 25, 1888.

Darlingest Sorel:

. . . On Monday morning (day after tomorrow) I start, D. V., for Verona, which is a place, I suppose, within reach of Bassano? and there I hope to meet my Sorel at Castel Franco, and go with her where she pleases. Only I must be back here in Paris in November, and I've some essential work to do in Venice, so I can't be long anywhere else, and I can't get to Verona quite as fast as steam could carry me for I have to see my old Chamouni on the way, and I'm going by the Allee Blanche down the Val d'Aosta, which will take a little time.

It seems as if my life had been given back to me as it was in 1878, before any of the delirious illness. I am drawing and writing with my old decision and pleasure, doing what delights Joan in *Praeterita*, and giving the French copyists in the Louvre something to think about, extremely new to them. And I am on my feet nearly all day long—in the Louvre or in the gardens or the streets—enjoying *everything*, but above all the shop girls of the lace and silk and oriental embroidery shops; and getting smiles of approval of my good taste! I've got very far on with a little Turk who, with her mother, sells me silks inwoven with gold, and scarlet Fezzes and such like; she gives me my tea when I'm tired in the afternoon and plays me pretty Turkish music,

singing also very nicely when her mother bids her. That's enough to confess tonight, but I never could have believed I should take to Paris life this way. It seemed exactly the thing I wanted!

Ever your lovingest
Fratel."

"Paris, August 26, 1888.

Darling Sorel:

What will you think of your Fratel, I wonder, now! He was up at five this morning and out for an hour's walk before his coffee, for the first time these three years, and enjoyed it ever so much. And he had two artists at lunch and a young lady artist and her mother at tea, and was out listening to the band in the Tuileries afterwards, and walking with a crowd in the Palais Royal and sauntering in the Avenue de l'Opera, and tomorrow, D. V., he starts fair for Verona!

My dear little Sorel, I shall be so glad to hear you're out of that horrid Tyrol. You had no business to go there. Dear love to *Mamma*, but I didn't think she would have left l'Abetone! What times we shall have, she and I, when she really finds out what a naughty Filio she's got!

Ever your lovingest
Fratel."

The following letter from Mr. Ruskin was written

just after his visit to Bassano. A description of this visit was written by Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge in a letter dated December, 1888, and is included in Part II of this volume.

“Venice, October 10, 1888.

Sweetest *Sorella*:

This is only a little leaf of love-letter, for I have nothing to say of myself—good—but that I love my *Sorel* and *Mammina* and their several friends. I find myself totally changed, and that living people are now everything to me. This may be partly your doing, *Sorella*, in having told me so many lovely tales and drawn for me so many sweet faces. But St. Ursula herself is nothing to me any more, and the faces I used to think so beautiful in Bellini or Cima are not now half so interesting as every third or fourth I pass in Venetian streets. How much less then than Marina's or Silvia!

Not but that, if the good Signor Balestier and I got together into a mine, I can fancy a crystal heart would still have some sentiment for me. He has sent Detmar¹ and me two charming letters for which I must pray you to thank him with both our hearts.

Layard² also is unexpectedly kind, and Browning, not unexpectedly, as he always was, but very touchingly.

¹ Mr. Detmar Blow, a young architect travelling with Mr. Ruskin.

² Sir Austen Henry Layard, British author and archæologist, and writer on Italian art, who spent some of his later years in Venice.

them, in England, at this season! There, it is rather hard to stop just as I am beginning, but I must. Good-bye! Love from us both.

Your affectionate

Sorella.”

“Florence, May 3, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

I have just received by the post the loveliest present that ever the post carried, and without a word of explanation! But I believe you sent it, for when we had managed to take off a paper that some one had pasted on it, we found your name underneath. So I sit down this morning to thank you for it, only wishing that my pen could set down half of what I really feel with regard to your kindness and constant thought for me. How could you ever have thought of sending to me that beautiful cup and saucer with the roses? Is it like the rose cup that you drink your coffee from in the morning? This one will never be used for coffee—I am almost afraid to let anybody *see* it! But *Mamma* says she will give me a glass to put it under. As for the spoon with the three lilies—she and I both know what *they* mean! They are in memory of the three lilies that blossomed in my garden all at once on the day when, in answer to so many prayers, you began to recover from your illness two years ago. (Do you know those were the *first* and the *last* flowers that ever blossomed

on that lily!) But it is such beautiful old work! Nobody here ever saw any like it. *Fratello mio*, I need not tell you what treasures these are to me, nor how precious they will be kept. I can only thank you with all my heart for this, as well as for all your goodness to me.

People keep coming, and I *must* end! But my Sunday letter will be pretty long! Good-bye, and love, and no end of thanks from *Mamma* as well as from me.

Your affectionate *Sorella*."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"8th May, '89.

Darling Sorel:

I'm up to breakfast today for the first time—and I must just scrawl you a letter for my head and heart are so full—first of *rispetti*—It is clearly your first duty to the world and me—and mine to the world and you—and that of both of us to the piece of the world called Tuscany—to collect all the *rispetti* we can—(I mean—you can—but me's you and you's me in a pretty *sorellino* sense)—and print them beautifully in a shape easily tenable by a girl's little hand—Italian of each on left and yours on right—for indeed, Sorel dear, you have an *exquisite* poetic gift of translation—it is so beautiful in being so entirely subordinate and reflective—you are like my lake with the sun on it—and all the lovelier

for never wanting to say anything of your own—and it will be the best work for me, too, that can be.

Well, have you my *Val d'Arno* in Florence? I send you one for your very own—and I want you to hand the other to anybody—with a soul in it—that can extract the gist of the book in a form translatable into Italian—it's too hard reading for myself—and has more mistakes mixed with the best part of truth in it than any other of my books—the worst mistake I *know* in it is giving the Norman plate 4 as characteristic of the French work of St. Louis' time—but I think what it says of Tuscany is mostly true—only I want to complete and correct it before I die.

Now I must say how thankful I am for your sympathy about my gardener—he's entirely worthy and clever and good,—without one ray of sympathy—he likes it himself—too!—but now for ten years I've been telling him *anything* of lily—crocus—rose—apple—almond—cherry—or rhododendron—tribe or tribes—you have carte blanche to get at *any* expense—for garden or greenhouse—but not orchids nor calceolarias nor the many odd things that are about everywhere. And once I turned his whole greenhouse full of calceolarias out,—and gave them away—and when I went into the greenhouse the day before *yesterday* out of a thunder storm—it was as full as it could hold of calceolarias again—

and the wild grass all over my own strawberry bed—and the weeds under my gooseberry bushes.

Your own Fratel.”

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

“Florence, May 9, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

We have had a long visit from a cousin of Count Pasolini, just come to Florence with his wife, so a good part of the morning has gone. And now at last I am alone—really alone this time; for Edwige has gone off to Le Rose, to her little Sister’s wedding.

But only to think of your looking forward to hyacinths and gentians, while we are in the midst of a perfect blaze of roses and geraniums! I wish you could see my terrace! But never mind the terrace now. I want to answer the more serious part of your letter. You must not ask me to think of you as ‘answerable for Rosie’s death’ when I know that you would have saved her if you could: if any were to blame they were those who parted her from you; and I do not blame even them as I did once, for believe me, *Fratello*, that I do not say it to comfort you but because I feel sure it is true. She could never have lived long! The beautiful face that hangs before me in the little silver frame between Ida and my crucifix was never made for this world.

Here is Edwige come back from the wedding, tired, but very happy, having passed all the afternoon yesterday in helping Raffaellina arrange her furniture in the new home. She left everything in order: the linen folded in the drawers (it is that old-fashioned hand-spun linen that you approve of, and will last until the '*sposi bambini*,' as the neighbours call them, are white-haired old people), the plates in the cupboard, the pot of carnations and two geraniums in the window, and the Madonna del Buon Consiglio hung over the bed. Nicodemo had laid in a supply of provisions: an immense loaf of dark coloured bread, enough to last four or five days (Edwige complained that it would grow pretty hard, but Raffaellina said that she liked it all the better so; it would last the longer!), a flask of wine, a quarter flask of oil, and a little pepper and salt.

He also gave the bride what she called 'a great deal of money' (between four and five francs) to spend as she thought best. And the '*Sposi Bambini*' feel so rich, that they could hardly be happier for the present, if they had a fortune! I hope they may be blessed until the end: people say that Emilia's prayers are with them. But I must leave you; so, good-bye, and love always from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate

Sorella."

“Venice, June 11, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

I have not told you anything yet of the great delight with which I listened to *Mamma's* reading of the last *Praeterita*: all that you tell about Joanie is so lovely! I am glad that you have written of her so that she can never more be forgotten but will be known and loved in the world hundreds of years hence; as *we* love some dear good people of the old time. Also what you say about Scotland is to me of the greatest interest; for it is the country of my family, and I love it, though I have never seen it, and now probably never shall see it. But I always like Scotch people, and they seldom fail to like me. Of course I can't feel as you do about the bad influences of the Mediterranean coast, being fully persuaded that most of the troubles of Italy come from the north of the Alps, and that if the Italians would once give up trying to be '*al par degli altri*' everything would go on delightfully. But then I don't pretend to be impartial when I love people; and I *do* love the Italians—better in some ways than they love themselves; for they are spoiling their beautiful country as fast as they can!

But indeed, *Fratello*, after the despondent way in which you have spoken of yourself to me lately, I was not prepared for anything so beautiful as this! Does not every one feel in the same way about it? Among other things, it seems to

me that the picture which you give of your own mother is the most lovable that you have yet drawn of her. I do not speak of the descriptions of natural scenery, for when one says they are *yours* there is nothing more to say.

But I must leave you now: Joanie says you are *resting*; and I pray that you will not try to answer any of my letters until you are quite rested and have taken up your usual life again. I am not at all afraid of your forgetting me; and when I know that you are resting, I am happy. Good-bye; and love as ever from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate

Sorella."

“Venezia, Di 4 Luglio, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

Today has been a real festa day to me, made so by receiving your kind and most beautiful letter. I was more glad to have it than usual, as I did not hear from you last week, which made me fear you might not be feeling well; but now I see that it was only because you had enough to think of in poor Joanie in so much need of comfort!

But how strange to hear you speak of drought and no more sound of running water, when we have storms here every day, with rain and thunder and lightning—sometimes really terrific! Yesterday it did not rain, and I overheard Ed-

wige saying to the gondoliere's wife, 'I should not wonder if he were learning, little by little, to behave better!' ('He,' meant the weather, which she always speaks of in that personal way.) But the rain came in the night, and this morning there were pools of water standing in the streets.

I am afraid that some of the gondolieri, with all their agreeable qualities, are given to swearing when they are angry; but then Edwige says that it is not so sinful for 'these foreigners' to swear as it is for Italians. (I am sorry to say that 'foreigner' with her stands for Venetian, and 'Italian' for Tuscan.) This seemed to me rather queer sort of morality, and I asked her what made the difference. She said, 'Because people here speak such a language that nobody can understand much of what they say; but in Florence they speak a beautiful clear language and every one knows what they mean!' It is easy to laugh at poor Edwige's sayings, but sometimes there is much wisdom in them.

Yesterday afternoon she was walking with me when we passed a hard-faced woman leading a pretty little girl of twelve or thirteen years, who carried a violin. Edwige became quite excited with pity and indignation at the sight; she said that the woman took the child to play at cafés and restaurants, and that it was a '*brutto mestiere*.' I was surprised at the amount of feeling she displayed, and asked her, 'But is it not easy work compared with what other poor girls have

to do? Only think how hard your own life has been!’

She answered very quickly, ‘But my life has not been hard!’ And when I asked what she meant, she said, ‘My life has been poor but not hard: I have worked hard, but I did it willingly, for my children; and I would do it willingly over again. A *hard* life is one that has wrongdoing in it. And I have never been a slave.’ In answer to my farther questions, she said, ‘I have been poor and in subjection; but that is not being a slave.’ . . .”

“Primiero, Di 25 Luglio, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

I am thankful at last, after a week of confusion, to find myself again beginning a Sunday letter, and hope that I may have a quiet hour to finish it. We were sorry to leave Venice, when the time came, after the lovely seven weeks we spent there: one never really can grow tired of Venice and the Laguna, even after all that has been done to spoil them. They were just building the bridge of boats to the Redentore when we came away; and were expecting a very grand festival, as the Queen had promised to be present. But I was much shocked at the placards that were pasted upon the walls: ‘*Baccanale del Redentore.*’ Only think of putting those two words together! Though really it is not so bad

as it sounds, for it is a very innocent sort of bac-canale; nothing but music and coloured paper lanterns and going down to the Lido to see the sunrise.

But I must come to our journey. We passed the night at Bassano. In the morning it rained; but I just took a run around the garden, looked at the flowers (for all the plants there are old friends), saw what the seeds that I gathered last year were doing—and then we set out past the dear old city, and turned up the lovely valley of the Brenta. That first part of the journey was all pleasant until we came to Primolano, where we waited a while and walked about the town, and saw the place where the terrible battle was fought, of which the very thought makes one shiver! But some young people, whom we asked to show us the precise spot, knew nothing about it—only think of its being forgotten so soon! But a gray-haired man, sitting in the door of the very small café, remembered it all and came out and showed us the winding, precipitous road, which the Italians and Austrians disputed, inch by inch, for so many hours! There is no monument or inscription of any kind to mark the place. Primolano is a very pretty little village with canopies of grape-vine over the doors, and flourishing geraniums in the windows; and I saw some broken stones with the remains of ancient carving built into a wall: a cross, and the Lion of St. Mark, and some ornamental work deserving

a better fate. But after we had entered the carriage again, an officer came up to the window and asked us some questions about where we were going, and made such extraordinary assertions about the road before us that we thought he was laughing at us, and cut the conversation as short as politeness would admit.

‘It is a terrible road!’ he said. ‘I hope you will pass it safely; but—I tell you! There are places on that Primiero road where it is needful to make the sign of the Holy Cross! And you will have to walk a good deal of the way. Have you any umbrellas? Well, you had better keep them up when you walk; for the water keeps drop, dropping there, most of the time, and often a stone or two drops down with it.’

We did not believe any of this, and the Veturino about that time drew down the curtains (making an excuse of the sun which was just coming out) and we went on quite contentedly. But the road grew steeper and steeper and after some time the sun clouded in again and we put up the curtains, just as we were entering the strangest ravine that ever I saw! A small noisy river seemed as if it had cut a great mountain in two, and made for itself a narrow valley, with nearly perpendicular walls of rocks, which rocks were laid in such regular order that it was difficult sometimes not to mistake them for mason’s work, though at the top they were broken into jagged cliffs, rising high up into the sky and

often disappearing in the clouds. From these cliffs many great masses of rock had fallen into the bed of the stream below, causing it to turn and foam and struggle as if it were fighting for its life with the stones,—the water always having the best of it at last, as water always does. And half up the terrible wall, as high above the stream as the Duomo—if not higher—was a very narrow road, sometimes with a low stone wall on the side of the precipice, sometimes with a slight—and frequently broken—wooden fence, often with nothing at all. In many places, if I had stretched out my arm, I could have dropped—not thrown—a stone, into the far-away stream below.

And along this narrow road we were obliged to pass in a large and heavy landau, which Piero della Stella had brought for our greater convenience, much too wide for the path, which indeed was not much more than a mule-path! Above us, in many places, the precipice projected and hung over our heads: it seemed formed, in great part, of broken and decomposing stones, of which many, loosened by the rain, had fallen into the road, and made us see the wisdom in the advice of the officer at Primolano! The road itself had been washed away in one place and was newly mended with a load of loose earth and some brushwood; in another place, some men were mending it. They stopped as we came by and looked at us solemnly and anxiously

without speaking—their manner was not reassuring.

As soon as we reached a place where we were not afraid to speak, we asked the Vetturino to let us descend, and then walked until we had passed the more dangerous part. It was perhaps well for us that we could not see any long stretch of the road at once, owing to the winding of the valley. But once on our feet, the horror of it all was over—at least for me—and I could enjoy the extreme, though savage beauty of the place.

For it was beautiful beyond all description, and (since no harm came to us) I am most thankful for having seen it. I wish I *could* describe to you the vivid green of such trees as could find a place to cling to, and of the patches of fine mountain grass wherever any earth had settled in the hollows of the rock—and the lovely mountain flowers. . . . Oh, *Fratello*, such pinks and such bluebells! I do not believe I shall ever forget one cluster of white fringed pinks that had grown between two fallen stones at the very edge of the abyss: their delicate beauty made me ashamed of my fears, for if *they* were taken such care of in that terrible place, surely (I thought) *we* should be!

But the most wonderful sights of all were the cascades, the streams that came to the edge of the rocks above, and then fell into the stream below. Some would come bright and smooth over the projecting rocks, far up against the sky,

and not touch anything again until they reached the bottom of the ravine, broken into a shower of fine rain, that the wind would wave about on its way as though it were a cloud. Others dashed down among broken rocks, that turned them all to foam as white as snow; and one had worn the rocks quite smooth, and slid down like a wavy silver ribbon, without a break. And one, perhaps the loveliest of all, spread itself over the side of the precipice, like the folds of a thin gauze veil. Many flowed from caverns in the mountainside, and had but a short life before they were lost in the *Schener*, as they call the terrible mad river.

Then we passed a place where the valley made a sudden turn. Before we had finished looking for new dangers, we found that we had left the ravine behind us, and were in a pleasant and peaceful country, with woods and pastures and villages. Then the sun came out and threw a rainbow across the mountain and the clouds, the trees showing through it and taking its colours.

And after that, nothing more especial happened to us until, before long, we came in sight of this pretty town with its white houses and bright gardens and old Gothic church, of all which I will write you next week.

It is late now, and I only hope I have not wearied you with my account. I am waiting anxiously now for Joanie's next letter, which, I

hope, may bring good news of you. Love from
Mamma, and the same always from

Your affectionate

Sorella."

"Primiero, Di 31 Luglio, 1889.

Mio caro Fratello:

The last week has been passed principally in learning to know this very singular and beautiful country, and I feel as if I were only just beginning. I told you last week of our journey; and today will just begin where I left off and write you some of my first impressions.

The day after our arrival was Sunday; and, having rested in the morning, in the afternoon I went to church with Edwige. On our way through the main street of the little city, I saw that it looked very clean and bright and cheerful, and that balconies and windows were filled with beautiful flowering plants, principally geraniums, carnations, and fuchsias, all of rather unusual size and luxuriance. Some of the houses were handsome and quite old, with pretty arched windows: nearly all large and comfortable, and massively built; but roofed with wooden shingles, like houses that I used to see in the country in America, when I was a child. They nearly all seemed to open into large gardens behind. The wooded hills rose steep about the city, appearing over the roofs, and at the ends of the streets, with bare and fantastic rocks

rising behind them. The city seems to lie in a nest, and is none too easy of access from the outside world; which no doubt has been in many ways an advantage to it. Over several doors in the town (as I have seen since in the country) was this beautiful inscription: '*Christus nobiscum stat.*' All this, and much more, we observed during the few minutes' walk to the church, which stands on a little eminence above the city, in a green field.

It is a Gothic church; at least I believe they call everything Gothic that has pointed arches, but it is not in the least like anything Gothic that I ever saw before; it is all narrow and slender and upright, with long slits of windows and little round panes of glass and a very steep roof, and pointed arches—I daresay you will know what I mean; and it is very beautiful in its way. We went in and found it so full of people that we could find no seats; though we did at last find a place to kneel, beside an old contadina, who looked good and pleasant, though a little rough.

The vesper service was going on, and the people sang very sweetly, though without any instrument; it is so pleasant to go into a church in any part of the world and hear prayers and hymns that one knows! It makes a foreigner feel so at home! Before long they struck into the '*Pange Lingua*' that my dear Enrichetta taught me, and that she and I used to sing together—it was so beautiful to hear it in these

far-away mountains where I was not expecting any sound of home! I joined; and then two or three people looked at me and smiled and nodded encouragingly. They have these easy friendly ways in church here; but they are very devout: I wish you could have seen with how much earnestness even very little children joined in the service! Only one little girl of fourteen or so I saw whispering to her mother, which surprised me; but after a minute she came over to us and said, 'Come and sit on our bench, there is room!' The people were very plainly dressed, mostly in contadino clothes; and the only difference which they appeared to make for church was that many of the women and girls wore white handkerchiefs, with lace borders, on their heads, which were pretty and becoming. There were many pretty and pleasing faces in the congregation, and people were all kind in their ways to us, the only strangers present, and did not let us feel lonely at all. So much for first impressions.

The next day I had occasion to go to some of the shops and to make more or less acquaintance with various people. One old woman kept a little fruit stand under a tent: she was very brown and wrinkled, and exceedingly poor in her dress; but her dark eyes were large and handsome (though much sunken) and had a keen, searching expression. I asked the price of some cherries; she did not answer at once, but looked solemnly and steadily in my face for a

moment; then said, with rather a lofty smile, speaking slowly and distinctly: 'I like you, because you speak good Italian! I am an Italian from Fonzaso; we do not speak like people here.' Afterwards, when she had sold me the cherries, she wrapped them in a sheet of white paper, saying, 'I always keep nice clean paper for my fruit, because I am an Italian! People here would give you any kind of paper; but we Italians like to have things clean: we are different from the Primiero people.' (I am sorry to say that I could not return her compliment with regard to the good Italian, for she spoke the queerest kind of a dialect.)

I have acquired some new ideas since I have been here, with regard to the utility of street boys: really, I don't know what the city would do without them! The shopkeepers go away when they feel like it, and leave their shops open for any one to go in. When I want to buy something and can find nobody to attend to me, these children always take me under their protection: they run in different directions until some one of them finds the missing shopkeeper, and marches him triumphantly in; the other children following to enjoy the spectacle. Sometimes he cannot find what I want; then I come away, but some time afterwards in some other part of the city, I hear the boys calling and screaming at me, two or three together: '*Signora, Signora!* The man in that shop wants you! He has

found what he was looking for!' And then they march me in and wait to see what sort of bargain we make. The patriotic old lady of the fruit stand is usually absent, and some of the boys go and find her, when a customer comes along. Only think of a fruit stand left all day under the guardianship of street boys! But they tell me that nothing is ever stolen in this remarkable city of ninety-five houses! (The guide-book says that is the number: they look like more, but then most of them are quite large.)

The language here is quite an intelligible dialect of Italian, so that I can make myself at home with the people; who all are very polite, though they do not carry their ideas of good manners quite so far as the Bassano people, who will reprove a cat for turning her back on a visitor.

Last evening I gave a (not very good) pear to a barefoot baby who cried for it. His mother, who carried him in her arms and who was a Bassano woman, told me very seriously that she hoped I would excuse the child's not thanking me, as he had not yet learned to talk. Which was certainly a good reason!

Edwige is delighted with everything, especially with the beautiful country around; and she expressed her feelings about it a while ago by saying to me, 'How I wish I could bring an eye up here for some of the people who can't see it!' But I must end.

Joanie sends us always good and comforting accounts of you, making me hope that the summer is passing well and peacefully with you; so that I am able to enjoy this rest without any great present anxiety; and it is indeed a very blessed rest to me, and I needed it more than I knew!

Next time I will tell you something of our own life. Meanwhile, good-bye for now, with love always from *Mamma* and

Your affectionate *Sorella*."

Mr. Ruskin to Francesca:

"Brantwood, Coniston, Lancashire,
6th August, 1889.

Darling Sorel:

Your beautiful letters—though one frightened me about that terrible road—make me very thankful that you have found such a place as Primiero—full of your own sort of dear people and pure delights—and that it with its ninety-five houses has found you. The 31st of July one with its account of the street boys in charge of them and you, is a great delight to *me* also; how difficult it is to avoid underlining words continually—as if all things that delighted my *Sorella* were not delights to me also.

But it is a new pleasure to me to find myself in complete sympathy with boys—though Joanie's three are sweet enough with those two

of Silvia's—for any quantity of sympathy. But for street boys—well, when I look into myself—I have not been wanting in sympathy with them after all—only this is a new light for it.

I hope Joanie will be able to send you a word or two about herself, and to say that she is pretty well pleased with me just now—and that my Sorel may go on making herself at home with those kind and happy people.

(It really would be my best employment if Joanie would dictate letters to me—and make me write them large and make me copy my own till they were legible.)

Yes, that must have been quite a lovely vesper service—and if that pointed Gothic is old—the church must be deeply interesting. But I have begun—too late—to care for living people instead of stones. Dearest love to *Mamma*. All affectionate messages to Edwige.

Ever your devoted

Fratel."

Francesca to Mr. Ruskin:

"Florence, October 14, 1890.

Mio caro Fratello:

When I sent you my last letter I did not think that I should have let so long a time go by without taking up the pen again; but every hour has seemed to be more than full.

I have not much to tell you. My principal pleasure is in Joanie's most kind letters, lately

filled with news which makes me always more and more thankful. She writes me how well you are and what pleasant walks you and she have together; and I only hope she enjoys them as much as I did that walk you took with me when we went down to Bassano to see the dear old lady. I never walked down that pretty road afterwards without thinking of it!

Another event in our very quiet life at present has been the christening of Edwige's new grandchild (No. 39) whom she brought to see us on its way to the church, in its little white bandages and pink ribbons—a splendid great baby, with curly dark hair and deep red and brown colouring; and a dimple in the middle of one cheek, considered very ornamental. Edwige waited, smiling proudly, but with tears of pleasure in her eyes, while we took it in our arms and admired it; then as she wrapped it up in her shawl, she said quite simply and as if it were the most natural way to speak of going to S. Giovanni with the baby: '*Ora vado portare quest' anima a Gesu.*' She is a godmother as well as grandmother, and has given him the name of Paolo, 'Because then he will have a really great Saint in Heaven!' she says.

I have written in a great hurry, wanting to say more than I had time for. Good-bye, and much love from us both.

Ever your affectionate
Sorella."

The two preceding letters are the last of Mr. Ruskin's and Francesca's which we are able to publish. There were many letters from Mrs. Severn to Mrs. Alexander and Francesca, giving them news of Mr. Ruskin during his last illness. We include one of Mrs. Severn's pleasant letters:

“Brantwood, Coniston, Ambleside,
22nd March, 1892.

Beloved *Mamma*:

How can I thank you for all your great kindness. I did not give the G——s a letter of introduction, for I thought that might involve their going to you when perhaps you might not wish it, and you have done quite *the* kindest thing in leaving your card upon them and giving them an opportunity of returning it. The note to Mr. Newman please just destroy, it was only venturing to ask also if the G——s might make *his* acquaintance. The odd thing is I have not heard at all from Mrs. G—— since Mrs. Holt wrote giving me their address and saying how very grateful they would be if they might have an introduction to you.

We are having lovely summer weather and your *Figlio* is wonderful. The photo of him with me was done by an amateur and has never been mounted. The other is his boat with me, and old Arthur in one beyond, and his sailing boat at her mooring from our Harbour makes a nice little

group. The Di Pa's¹ own boat, he is rowing me in, with waves and stars round as a pattern I chose for it—which chanced to be on Sir Francis Drake's shield. The Di Pa christened his own boat *The Jumping Jenny*, from Sir Walter Scott's 'Redgauntlet,' and while we put a wreath of daffodils on her bow as she was launched, he said,

‘Waves give place to thee,
Heaven send grace to thee,
Fortune to ferry kind hearts and merry.’

The other photo of your *Figlio* is from the Northcote portrait of him at 3½. Post, alas! going.

Your grateful, ever loving
Figlia.”

Our love always F's and mine to the *Sorella*.

Mr. Ruskin's cousin, Mrs. Arthur Severn, was to him like a very dear younger sister. Mr. M. H. Spielman, in his biography of John Ruskin, writes of her in a chapter entitled, "The Angel in the House." This she truly was. Her love for Mr. Ruskin and her devotion to him were unfailing. She was a most thoughtful friend to Mrs. Alexander and Francesca, and always wrote to them whenever Mr. Ruskin was too ill to write.

Of the last years of Mr. Ruskin's life, his dear and intimate friend, Charles Eliot Norton, has written, "The last years of his life were spent in retirement and, save for recurrent attacks of brain trouble, his

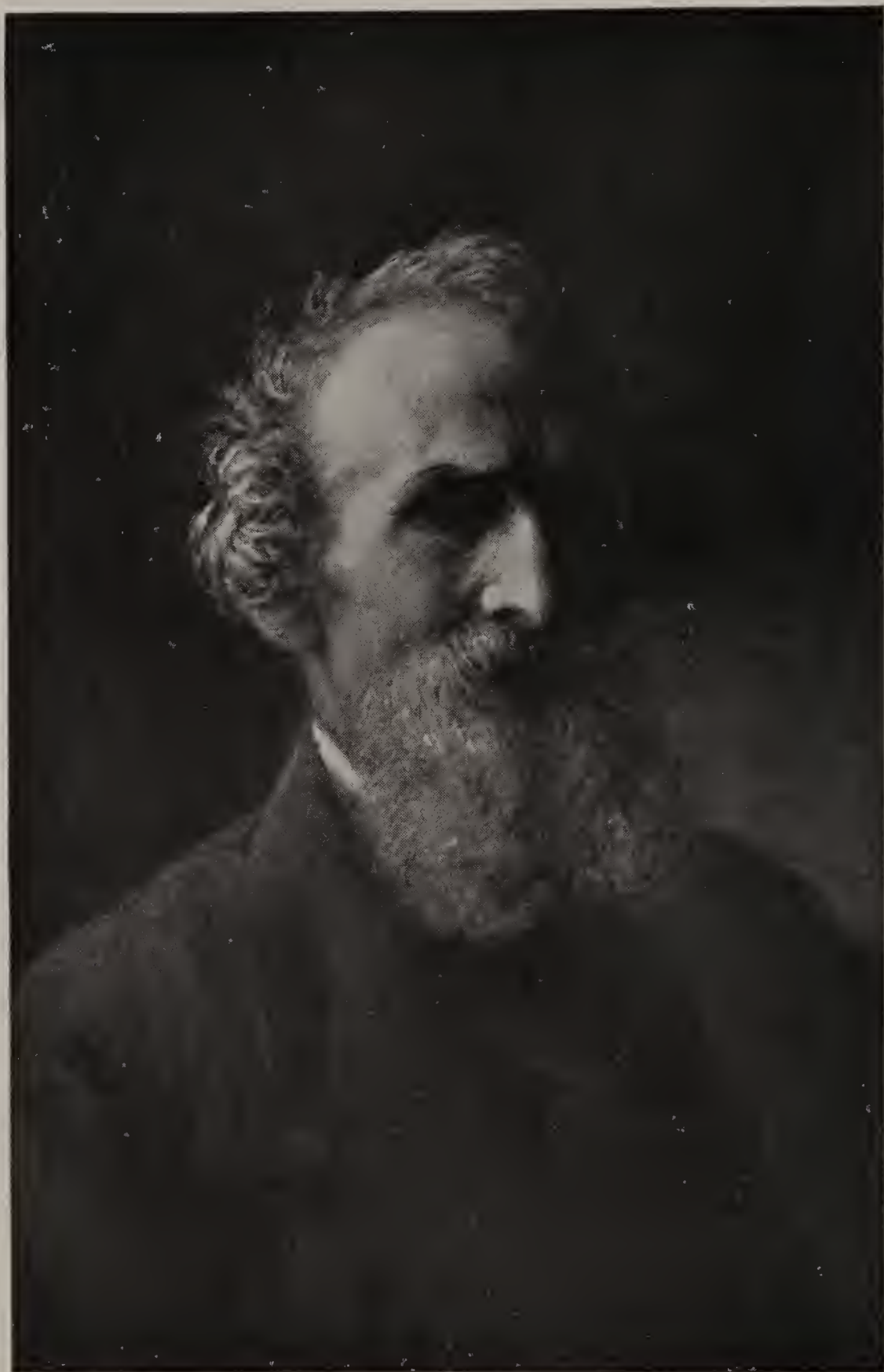
¹ "Di Pa" was the name given to Mr. Ruskin by Mrs. Severn's children, when they were very young.

days were peaceful and not unhappy. He still enjoyed the beauties of Nature and of Art, still loved to listen to simple music. He was cared for with entire tenderness and devotion.

“His sun sank slowly, and amid clouds, but they did not wholly darken its light.”

All through these last years, whenever he was able to write, Mr. Ruskin wrote to Francesca, and Francesca often sent him flowers and wrote to him constantly.

Time, separation, trouble—nothing could mar nor alter their affection for each other, and their friendship remained unchanged to the end.



FRANCIS ALEXANDER

From a self portrait

PART II
MEMOIRS OF THE ALEXANDERS

INTRODUCTION TO PART II

FRANCESCA loved Florence intensely, and delighted in its old churches, galleries, and works of art, of which there are many enthusiastic descriptions in her early letters from Italy. These have been omitted only because Florence is probably very well known to many of our readers.

Francesca was a beautiful child; as she grew older she spoke of herself as “plain.” She had handsome dark eyes and a bright color; her other features were plain, but she had a very sweet and kind expression, which attracted every one to her.

Many of her early letters are written in a very fine, running hand on thin paper. To decipher them, in some cases, requires a magnifying glass, or very keen sight, which my sister fortunately has, and all the letters in the following pages have been read and compiled by my sister.

After Francesca had lived a few years in Florence, where she studied the old manuscripts, her handwriting entirely changed, and she wrote a very clear, round hand, as beautiful and as legible as any of the old manuscripts.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I EARLY ASSOCIATIONS	211
II THE FIRST YEARS IN FLORENCE	220
III ABETONE	260
IV THE VISIT TO AMERICA AND THE RETURN TO ITALY	303
V SOME ITALIAN FRIENDS	339
VI THE GIOSTRA	354
VII 1880 TO 1884	365
VIII OUR AUNT AND HER BOOKS	389
IX OUR LAST VISIT TO OUR AUNT AND FRANCESCA	423

CHAPTER I

EARLY ASSOCIATIONS

FRANCIS ALEXANDER was born in Killingly, Connecticut, February 3rd, 1800. He tells his own story in Dunlap's *History of the Arts of Design in the United States*. Of his early life he writes:

“My course in early life was none of the smoothest; it being midst rocks and stumps, briars and thistles, and finally, through all the perplexities and privations incident to the life of a poor farmer's son. I might tell of going barefoot to church hundreds of times in warm weather, three miles distant, and of a thousand similar incidents. The relation of such facts might not interest your readers so much, perhaps, as it might injure the feelings of my very aged and very respectable parents. (Their ages are 76 and 77, and they are living in much comfort and quiet, in a beautiful white cottage which I erected, two years ago, expressly for their benefit.)”

Of the courageous effort he made to study art he writes most interestingly, although modestly saying little about his later great success as a portrait painter. He writes:

“I painted two years or more in Providence.

I afterwards came to Boston bringing a painting of two sisters with me, which I carried to Mr. Stuart for his opinion; he said that they were very clever, that they reminded him of Gainsborough's pictures, that I lacked many things that might be acquired by practice and study, but that I had *that* which could not be acquired. He invited me to come to Boston and set up as a portrait painter, so accordingly, after going home and making the necessary preparations, I returned and commenced painting in that city, where I remained in the full tide of successful experiment until I set sail for Italy on the 23rd of October, 1831."

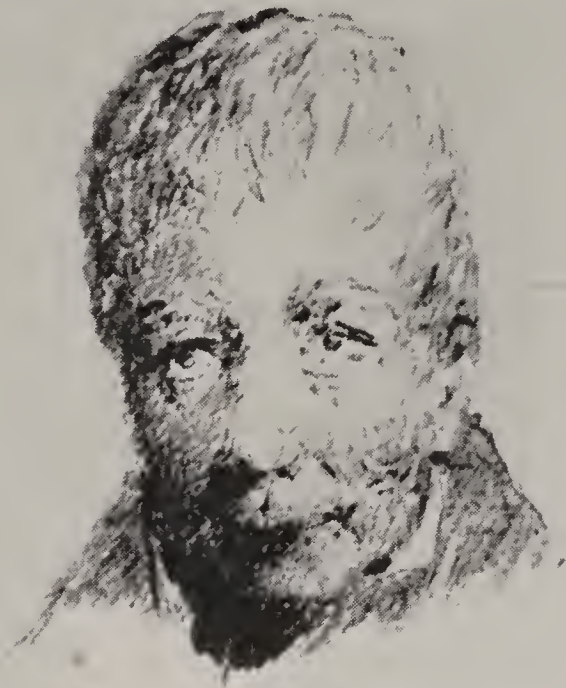
Mr. Alexander spent some weeks in Florence, then went to Rome, where he painted for three months. Sir Walter Scott visited him in his studio in Rome and remained nearly an hour. Mr. Alexander writes:

"I had painted an original Magdalen. Sir Walter moved his chair up within six feet of it; there he sat looking at it for some minutes without speaking. I was all impatience to know what he would say. He turned away with the laconic remark, 'She's been forgiven.' "

Sir Walter Scott sat to Mr. Alexander for a pencil sketch, which is reproduced here. After spending nearly a year and a half in Europe, Francis Alexander returned to America and took his old studio again in Columbian Hall. Here he painted portraits of many of the lovely women and prominent men of his day.

30th April 1832

This Day Sir Walter Scott call'd
at my painting Room in Rome
and sat with me half an hour!
— I'm indebted to Miss Douglass
of New York, for the introduction —



SIR WALTER SCOTT

From a pencil sketch by Francis Alexander

Among the latter were President Andrew Jackson, Longfellow, Dickens, Webster, and Judge Jeremiah Smith, one of his finest portraits, which was painted for Dartmouth College. He also painted a copy of it, now owned by Judge Smith's grandchildren in Cambridge. Among his portraits of beautiful women is one of Mrs. McKean of Philadelphia, who was Miss Phœbe Warren of Troy, New York, a great belle; one of Mrs. Dow, who was Miss McBurney, a lovely picture of a very beautiful woman; one of Miss Emily Marshall (Mrs. Wm. F. Otis), Mrs. Fletcher Webster, and pictures of the three beautiful daughters of Mr. Robert G. Shaw. I recollect a very handsome and graceful picture of Mrs. Pratt and the exquisite soft blue of her gown. The portrait was a pastel, in which he excelled.

In our library we have many family portraits by Uncle Alexander. The one which always first attracts attention is that of our mother painted when she was Mary Low.

On May 9, 1836, Francis Alexander married Lucia Gray Swett, daughter of Colonel Samuel Swett and of Lucia (Gray) Swett. My aunt, Mrs. Alexander, and my father were both born in Cambridge in the old house, which had been the summer home of their grandfather William Gray. Here their early childhood was spent until their father moved into Boston. Their elder brother William Gray Swett was born in Salem, where their parents had lived for a few years before moving to Cambridge. Samuel Swett had married the only daughter of William Gray of Salem. It seemed a very great request for a young lawyer with no fortune to ask one of the wealthiest merchants in the United States for the hand of his young, beautiful, and only daughter. The answer, however, was most kindly. In one of our aunt's books sent out from Italy, we found this old yellow letter, which she had kept so many years:

“Salem,
June 23d, 1807.

Mr. Swett:

I have recd. your letter of this day asking our consent to your uniting in marriage with our daughter,—

Having the fullest confidence in your honour, and that you will make a *kind, faithfull* and *affectionate* husband, we give our consent to that connection which we hope will promote your mutual happiness, which will be greatly promoted, by kindness, forbearance, and candor. This event I did hope would have been put off to a more distant period, but since I think you both arrived to years of discretion, we are content to leave you to decide—in the mean time, ask with freedom of me, any thing you wish, (in reason), I shall cheerfully comply with your request, and am

y. aff.

Wm. Gray.

Mrs. Gray joins me in the sentiments expressed in this letter.”

Colonel Swett went to the War of 1812 as an engineer officer on the staff of General Izard. After his return, he organized and was the first Commander of the New England Guards. Colonel Swett was the author of the first history of the Battle of Bunker Hill, and also of many historical papers and genealogical articles.

His father, Dr. John Barnard Swett, was the nephew and adopted son of Parson John Barnard of Marble-

head, and married Charlotte Bourne, daughter of William Bourne, of Marblehead. During the great yellow fever scourge in Newburyport in 1796, he contracted the fever of which he died.

Thacher, in his *Memoirs of Eminent Physicians*, writes,

“Dr. Swett was constantly at his post in the most infected district of the town, until he fell a martyr to his high sense of Professional Obligation. His death threw a gloom over the town not to be described in words.”

Colonel Swett's mother was married three times. Her second husband was Colonel Hamilton, who owned the beautiful old Hamilton house in South Berwick, Maine. After his death, she married the Governor of New Hampshire, John Taylor Gilman, who was Governor for fourteen years.

Some of the happiest days of my aunt's and my father's childhood were spent in visiting their grandmother in the old Gilman house in Exeter, New Hampshire. There our aunt made a friend for whom she always kept the greatest affection, Governor Gilman's niece, Mary Olivia Gilman, who married Commodore Long.

Mrs. Long's house was filled with rare and beautiful things. She was a charming hostess, and her tea parties were a great feature of Exeter life. Exeter was an old town of many traditions; interesting people lived in some of the old Colonial houses that lined its streets. My father, Dr. Samuel Bourne Swett, after spending several years in the hospitals in France, was induced by his love for Exeter to choose the harder life of a country doctor; as a surgeon he was called all over the county. Many a snowy winter's night he would start off in his sleigh to drive ten or fifteen miles, tak-

ing his snow shovel with him to dig his way out through the drifts. He was considered a confirmed bachelor until he fell in love with and married a beautiful young girl, Mary Low; she had spent the greater part of her childhood and girlhood with her aunt, who was Miss Elizabeth Hale and who had married, as his second wife, Judge Jeremiah Smith of Exeter. He had been Governor and later became Chief Justice of New Hampshire.

Mrs. Alexander was very fond of this young sister-in-law, and many were the visits between Boston and Exeter.

Our uncle and aunt after their marriage in 1836 lived on West Cedar Street in Boston, and had a summer home in Lynn. Esther Frances Alexander (Francesca) was born February 27, 1837, in the house on West Cedar Street. By her relatives and playmates she was called Fanny, although her parents often called her Fan. Francesca was the name by which later she became generally known and under which her books were published. Francesca had a happy childhood; in her centered all the love and devotion of her father and mother and also of her grandparents, as for several years she was the only grandchild. She had a happy, loving nature, was very gifted, and early developed her great talent for drawing, and delighted more in her drawing-book and pencil than in her most beautiful toys. We have several of her drawing-books filled with pictures of her relatives and friends. It was always easy for Francesca to write in verse; and many little German pieces which had been translated for her she turned into English verse. We have a number of these in her youthful handwriting.

The house on West Cedar Street was so near the Common that Boston Common was Francesca's happy playground. In summer she delighted in her garden in Lynn and in playing on the beach with her little friends. Her favorite playmates were always Willy



FRANCESCA WHEN A CHILD

From a crayon drawing by Francis Alexander

and Lucy Woodbridge, Sarah Barnard, and little Rose Hooper. She was sent to dancing school, but as she did not enjoy it, she went only a few times. No one insisted upon her going, although her grandfather was much interested in his grandchildren's learning to dance. As a young man, he had enjoyed dancing at the many balls and assemblies in Salem, and when he was a very old gentleman, his little grandchildren loved to have him show them the different steps: "The rigadon," and several others.

In Francesca's drawing she had no instruction, as both her father and mother believed in letting her develop her talent in her own way and keeping, as far as possible, her own personality. She had a fine contralto voice and was so absolutely lacking in self-consciousness that when requested would stand up and sing, with no accompaniment whatever, to her mother's friends or her own little playmates. We have a diary in her childish handwriting, in which she records her expenditures; and her love of music is shown by the numbers of pennies which went to the street musicians. It begins:

"Wednesday, January 5th: I gave four cents to a family with an organ, a clarinett, two tambourines and a violin.

"Wednesday, January 19th: I gave two dollars to the missionary society, also four cents to an organ—I forget whether it was a man or a boy.

"Monday, February 7th: I gave five cents to a girl with a tambourine who sang treble, and a man with a violin who sang bass. They walked right on and never gave me a single tune. I'll never give them a cent more.

"Wednesday, February 23rd: I gave three

cents to a boy in a grey coat, who had a magnificent organ. Willie came just as he was almost through, so I gave him another three-cent piece and he repeated almost all the tunes.

“Saturday, March 26th: I gave four cents to a boy in a green baize jacket. His organ was splendid, but he gave me only three tunes, which was mean. Perhaps he did not open the paper and thought it was only a cent. I shall try him again before I set him down here as very mean.

“Friday, April 1st: I gave four cents to two boys with organ and tambourines. They played *The Low-backed Car*, also *The Marseillaise*, though they did not play this last to me, as they ought to.”

Our aunt was brought up by a mother who was deeply religious and very charitable, and was taught that it should be a pleasure as well as a duty to give to the poor. Francesca learned from her own mother the delight of giving, and for many years the great work of her life was helping the poor in Italy.

Uncle Alexander's great talent and Aunt Lucia's charming personality, with her ready wit and never-failing sympathy, attracted a large circle of friends to their home. When Mr. and Mrs. Dickens were in Boston, they spent much of their time with our uncle and aunt, and in one of the latter's scrap-books were several interesting and intimate letters from Mr. and Mrs. Dickens. Of a little book given him by Aunt Lucia he writes, “I have received your beautiful book with exceeding pleasure and will always preserve it carefully for your sake. I have scarcely the heart to rob you of such beautiful triumphs, and yet I would not be without them for a great deal.” The book was a tiny

one filled with miniature etchings by Aunt Lucia, who had talent for both painting and drawing. We have two exquisite little pictures painted by her when she was quite young, and have often heard of her wonderful etchings.

In 1853, on account of Uncle Alexander's health, he and our aunt decided to go abroad. They spent the summer in Paris, where Francesca studied music with Bordogni. In the autumn they went to the south of France, and from there by way of Leghorn to Florence. They had planned to spend only a year or two in Europe, but it was fifteen years before they returned to America. Often they had hoped to return, but many things happened to prevent: first an illness of Francesca's, then two very serious illnesses of Uncle Alexander's, and finally the Civil War in America.

It was the end of the summer of 1868 when they returned to America, where they spent one year and then went back to Italy. From this time it became the dream of Aunt Lucia's life that they might come back and have a home among their friends in Boston, but it was a dream never to be realized. Finally, for Francesca's sake, she gave up all thought of ever coming again to America, and in 1883 decided to have her boxes, which had been stored for so many years, sent out to Italy. But she had lost all heart for the things that she had especially wanted to have in a home in America, and family portraits by Copley and Stuart were never unpacked: they remained in the basement of the Hotel Bonciani until they were returned to America in 1919.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST YEARS IN FLORENCE

WHEN the Alexanders went abroad in 1853, Francesca was only fifteen years old; consequently her early letters are the impressions of a very young girl. The following is to her little friend Lucy Woodbridge:

“Paris,
July 14th, 1853.

I will begin at the beginning and tell you about our journey. We left the old house, if I remember right, the evening of the day when you saw me last. And I was very sorry to leave it, for I knew I should never spend another night there. We spent that night at Grandpa's, and the next morning went away. Grandpa went down to the depot with us, and Mr. Putnam from Lynn, who had been helping us pack up, met us there. When we were in the cars, Mr. Putnam bid us good-bye and went away. And then Grandpa did. I was sorry when he kissed me and said good-bye for the last time, for I was afraid he would be very lonely. But I did enjoy going in the cars that day on to New York.

It was so beautiful to see the woods and pastures and gardens just in perfection. And America is certainly, in point of beauty, far beyond any part of France that I have seen. We stayed

a day in New York and then we went away in the steamer. We drove down to the wharf and found it so covered with wagons and carriages that we could not go on board for a little while. And I would have given anything then if the vessel would have gone away and left me on shore. But I am very glad that it did not, for then I should never have seen the ocean nor the Cathedral of Rouen, to say nothing, in that case, of never appreciating my own beautiful country, which I always admired but never knew before how superior it was to others. A New York friend of ours met us on board the ship and was the last friend I saw, from New York to Paris. I enjoyed the voyage very much indeed, more, I think, than anything yet. You cannot think how beautiful the ocean is when there is no land in sight. I cannot tell exactly how it looks, because there is nothing on shore to compare it to. The water is very black close by, and very blue a little way off, and there were two little rainbows, one on each side of the ship, that accompanied us all the way over. I was very fond of standing close by the paddle-wheel and watching the foam and the little rainbow come and go.

There were two sisters from Venezuela, whom I drew, and I believe they were half Indians. They were called Eleonora and Victoria. One might have been twelve and the other fourteen. The eldest was about as determined as anybody I ever saw. When I was drawing her, I asked

her if she were not tired. To which she always replied with a very decided 'No,' and a smile, as if such a thing were impossible. And when at last I asked her if her neck did not ache, for she had been sitting very still, she answered in a half-indignant tone, 'That is nothing; go on,' at the same time looking at me with solemn, intense black eyes, as if she wondered how I could think she could mind such a little thing as that. In consequence, partly of her perseverance, and partly of her pretty though somewhat Indian face, her picture is the best in the book.

At last, one morning, Papa ran into the state-room where I was sitting, and said, 'England is in full sight.' We went up on deck together, and there was the first land we had seen for nearly a fortnight. It was not nearly so pretty as the last view of America, though still it looked very pleasant. There were great rocks around the coast, and beyond them green hills. We saw but few villages and fewer woods, and I could not help wondering what the people did with so many green fields. Perhaps they were pastures. It was misty, but the sun kept striking here and there along the coast, and it looked beautiful. There were a great many ships and boats all around us, and so there were all day. It cleared up after a while, and then it looked better still. And we could see the land all day.

About sunset, we came in sight of the Isle of Wight, and a more singular place I never saw.

The first part of it that I saw was a long line of rocks, reaching out into the water, at first separate and then connected, and with a little line of sand by their side. These rocks were all pale whitish-grey, and of the most fanciful shapes. There were pillars and caverns and arches in abundance, and it looked just like the places princesses are carried off to in fairy tales. Pretty soon we passed the rocks and came to green hills, and then to woods. But by this time it was quite dark, and I could not see much. Only I could see light shining through the trees, and I knew people lived there.

Pretty soon we came to Southampton, where the vessel stopped to let some of the passengers go on shore. The lamps were lit, and it looked very pretty, but I thought it was so late I would not stay on deck that night any longer. When I waked up in the morning, I could feel that the ship was still, and I climbed up on the settee and looked out of the port-hole. It was a misty morning, and there were a great many boats in sight. The water was green, and I knew I was close by France and the voyage was over. It seemed to me everybody on board was very polite that morning. They seemed determined to part good friends, and so we did. By the time I was on deck, two little French steamboats had come alongside to take us ashore. So when we had had our breakfast, we went. I, for one, was quite sorry to leave the splendid vessel where I

had been so happy. The captain and the sailors waved their hats to us for good-bye, and I have not seen them since.

Very soon we had something else to interest us. We came close to the city itself, which looked very strange to me. There were very curious old houses coming into sight, and we passed right under an old, round tower that must have been a fort. Then the people who came to the wharf to see us looked different from Americans. The men were dressed almost all in homespun, and the women wore caps instead of bonnets. Also there were a great many soldiers standing about, and it did not look like home at all. When we were on shore, we went to the Custom House and had all our things examined, which did not agree with my Yankee ideas of independence. But there was nothing else to do. There was a place where we waited while Papa saw to most of the baggage. And then the German lady bid us good-bye, saying in a most affectionate manner, 'I hope you will have much pleasure in the world.'

That afternoon we set off in the cars for Rouen, and I had a chance to see what the country is like here. It is almost all cultivated, and the woods are planted in straight rows. The wild flowers are very pretty. I saw poppies in abundance. They are as common here as white-weed is with us. Also they have bachelor buttons and escoltzia and other flowers which we

raise in gardens. The apple trees looked pretty poor, and altogether the impression was what I told Papa, 'It's not up to home.' The houses had many of them thatched roofs, and the poorer kind were covered, I should say, with boards or plaster.

They did not have clapboarded houses, the way we do, but the boards were set up on end, after the fashion of our henhouses. As for your uncle's barn, it would be a palace to many of the houses here. I have often, in America, seen houses as poor, but then they were evidently meant to be only for a little while, and when the owner makes more money, he builds a better house.

We saw the Emperor and the Empress at the camp of Sartory near Versailles, and were very near them. The Emperor is quite a young man and looks rather melancholy, and a good deal like his portrait. The Empress is prettier than any picture of her that I have seen, but you might be disappointed in her, for she dresses very plainly, and looks very modest and quiet. She has blue eyes, brown hair, a fair complexion, rather small features. I hope that in a year's time we shall go home, but I do not know. I am contented and happy and glad we came, though I miss home some and I'm a greater Yankee than ever. I am taking music lessons of Bordogni and coming on finely. And Papa is a great deal better and seems quite happy. And though

Mamma was pretty homesick at first, she seems to enjoy herself very much now.

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny."

La petite Blanchiseuse, drawn by Francesca in Paris, the first summer she spent in Europe, is one of the last pencil sketches of hers that we have. Very soon after, she began drawing in pen and ink. Later, for several years, she devoted much time to painting, with her father for her teacher.

The Alexanders spent the summer of 1853 in Paris. Early in the autumn they went to the south of France, visiting Avignon and Marseilles, then by boat to Leghorn, and from there to Florence. The following letter was written from Florence, November 1st:

Francesca to Lucy Woodbridge:

"Dear Lucy,

Your descriptions of an afternoon at Lynn made me, for a while, very homesick, but I have about finished being homesick now. As for Mamma, I never saw her happier. We had quite a pleasant summer in Paris, but I must tell you now about our journey. From Paris to Chalons we went in the cars. The country was very beautiful, as is the whole of France which I have seen, but the villages looked poor. We spent Sunday at Chalons. The next morning we left in a steamboat on the Saone for Lyons." . . .

Francesca describes their visits to Avignon and Marseilles and then of their going by boat to Leghorn. She writes:

“We arrived late in the evening. The next day I saw the city. One of the first things I noticed was that the women did not wear white caps, but silk handkerchiefs over their heads, or else veils of lace or muslin, which are the Livornese fashion. I noticed also that the people were not so handsome as the French, and of course not nearly so handsome as the Americans.

About one o'clock we left in the cars for Florence. This city is very beautiful. I think one of the most beautiful things here is Giotto's campanile. I have seen it often in the bright sunshine, against a clear sky, when it looked so light it hardly seemed to rest heavily on the ground. I saw it the other night by moonlight, and then it was more beautiful than ever. It was hard to believe that it was solid. I will write you later about the galleries. The most beautiful pictures of all are by Perugino. I wish you could see his *Assumption of the Virgin*. She is going up in a glory of angels and looks as you might think any one would look going to Heaven. From our windows we see only the front of the Strozzi palace, which shuts out even the view of the sky.”

“Florence,
May 26, 1854.

The house where we are staying is situated in a place where five narrow streets meet. The pension Svizzera is our hotel, close to the Via Tornabuoni, the Via del Sole and the Via della

Vigna. The streets are narrow, and you keep passing old palaces all somewhat like the Strozzi, built of grey stone dark with age. The doors are almost all open, and we can look into pretty gardens with great magnolias and roses and lemon trees. There are hardly any woods about Florence, none such as we have in America, but there is a very handsome ornamental grove a little way out of the city which takes the place of our common. I walk there sometimes in the evening with Papa.

There are many birds there and a beautiful view of the city and the hills. I can now speak the language much better than when I first came here. I take lessons from an English lady. She has very strange ideas about America. She said that England was larger than all the United States put together, and was quite surprised when I told her that Boston was not a walled city. She asked if we were not afraid of being attacked by Indians. Please give my love to Sarah and Rose and Mrs. Hooper, and tell Rose not to forget me.

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny."

"Florence, June 16, 1855.

Tomorrow is the 17th of June, so of course I'm a little homesick. I remember the beautiful flag they used to display at the Anawam House that day. Here of course nobody

knows anything about Bunker Hill. Indeed, you would be very much surprised to hear the questions people here ask about America. They ask me whether Boston is a walled city, whether we keep slaves there, whether the slaves are generally black, whether they worship idols, and I do not know what else. There is an English lady here who will insist upon it that the American Revolution took place about forty years ago, and an Italian woman who had announced to me her intention of learning to speak English and American, was quite relieved when I told her one was enough. I even went to teaching her, but she never would go beyond good-night, good-morning, good-bye, and how-do-you-do; and she never could imagine that those meant anything. When she said good-night, she always said '*Felicissima notte.*'

June 18th: I had to leave my letter, to arrange some flowers which Papa brought me, and now I will tell you that I spent the 17th a good deal more pleasantly than I expected. Papa took me to San Miniato and asked the *custode* to leave us alone in the church. Then he walked around and looked at the pictures, and I went and sat in the choir all by myself. But I must make a rule not to write any more about San Miniato or I shall never write about anything else. I had almost forgotten to tell you of the principal event that has happened to us, which is our purchase of a very splendid picture of the *Coronation of*

the Madonna, said to be by Orgagna; how pleased you would be if you could see it, and how pleased I should be, too. The Madonna is bending forwards to receive the crown, which the Saviour places on her head. She is very beautiful, but her expression makes you forget her beauty. It is the expression of one who has passed through a great deal of trouble and come to her reward at last. You never saw anything so sweet and humble as she is. She is too much subdued to be astonished. It seems to me it is a picture that could hardly fail to make anybody better who looked at it. There are several other figures in the picture; one of St. Catherine is remarkably beautiful, and remarkably gentle and lovely, too. There are six little angels in the foreground kneeling and singing, with bunches of red and white roses in their hands, with golden wings—made with real gold, you must remember,—and with light curls falling down on their embroidered dresses. One of them is looking up with just such a loving, trusting expression as you see sometimes in the face of a little child when it looks at any one of whom it is very fond indeed. Of course they are all children's faces. One of the others is beating time, and turns around to see if the rest are attending. The execution of the picture is as beautiful as the design. The patterns on the dresses are all made out in gold, and the hair is drawn so fine that I wonder the painter's eyes

could have borne it. Also there is a gold background wrought out into rays. As for the colors, they are so fine that when you stand too far off from the picture to see the faces, the colors alone make it beautiful. I am sometimes afraid that when you come to see my pictures you will be disappointed, for after all they have their faults. And yet, after I have written this, I cannot tell what their faults are. They are a good deal out of repair, but I do not think you can help liking them.

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny.”

In June, 1856, the Alexanders moved out to Bellosguardo, taking the lower floor of the Villa Brichieri; the floor above was occupied by Frederick Tennyson, with his Italian wife and their children. The Tennysons and the Alexanders became warm friends. Among our aunt's letters were a number from Frederick Tennyson.

Several congenial American families had villas at Bellosguardo; from here they could easily walk to the city, and yet it had all the charm and quiet of the country. Some of their artist friends from America had studios in Florence, and many other Americans whom they also greatly enjoyed seeing were constantly coming. It was during these years that they made a number of their dearest and lifelong Italian friends, and here Francesca began her work among the poor contadini.

The first letter from Bellosguardo is from Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge.

“Bellosguardo, September 1, 1856.

Dear Lucy:

I told you when I last wrote that we were going to Arezzo, and that I would write and tell you all about it. So you must have wondered at not hearing from me for so long. But to tell the truth, we never went to Arezzo at all, and I have had too much to do all summer to think about writing. However, the letter will be long enough when it comes, for I have almost six months to tell you of. Soon after that letter went, we began to look for a villa. We had about enough of a summer in Florence last year when the cholera was there, and in the course of time we concluded to take the lower story of Villa Brichieri here at Bellosguardo, where we now are. We came here about the middle of June and found the story over our heads occupied by Mr. Frederick Tennyson, the brother of your favorite poet, with a pretty Italian wife and five children, of whom I will tell you in a little while. But first I must tell you about the place we live in. Maybe you have heard of Bellosguardo. It is a beautiful hill close by Florence, and very steep on the Florentine side, being all cut into terraces to accommodate the olives and grapevines. At the very top stands Villa Ombrellino, where all the strangers go to see the prospect, and a little below Villa Ombrellino is Villa Brichieri.

It is quite a handsome place from the road,

a large two-story house covered with yellow plaster, and having two balconies, one over the other, with the arms of the Brichieri Colombi family up under the roof. But it is quite beautiful inside, being three hundred years old, with great arched rooms and the thickest walls, I think, that ever I saw in a private house. In front of the house is a very pretty yard, with a great many trees and bushes—rose-bushes, in particular, that blossom all the time. Then at the back we have a quiet, retired little garden with a great magnolia tree in the middle, always reminding me of home. And at the end of the garden is a broad terrace paved with brick, where we walk in the evenings.

As for the view, it is rather difficult to describe, but I will try. To our left is the Valley of the Arno, a great smooth green plain, covered with farms and woods and little white villages, and bounded on all sides by mountains, which rise from it as from a lake. Papa said it probably was a lake once. Through this valley runs the road to Leghorn, marked by an almost unbroken line of houses and churches from Florence to the mountains. A great way off on one side of a mountain, I could see my beautiful city of Prato, and in clear weather I can make out that very campanile that I wrote you about. When it is very clear indeed, I can see Pistoia at the very farthest end of the valley, but it is not much more than a very bright line. This is a

very poor description of the valley but it is better, after all, than any I shall probably be able to give you of the mountains. They are so strange, and different from any you and I ever saw in America. If the plain looks like a lake, these hills look like some gigantic sort of ocean. Indeed they are more the shape of waves than anything I can think of, and they rise in the same way,—ridge behind ridge, as far as we can see. Some of these mountains are partly covered with woods, but most of them are bare, at least of large trees, and the vineyards and the olive orchards do not show much from a distance.

Scattered over and among the hills, some near and some far away, are any number of little villages, and great convents and churches, with little clusters of cypress trees by their sides, and old stone towers that were once, I suppose, fortifications. We can see Galileo's Tower on one side and a little to the left of it, San Miniato, which I told you of before. I care more for San Miniato than for any other part of the prospect. And we have a beautiful view of it, with its marble front and its broken tower, the great dark convent by its side and the old mosaic over the door. On our right hand, between the hills in a sort of basin, is Florence, close by us and directly under us, with the great dome rising over all the city. Beyond Florence we can see Fiesole.

But I think I have told you quite enough about the place where we live, only I want you to

imagine the shadow of the clouds shifting and changing over everything all day long. Having described the place, I must next try to give you some idea of our household. We have a man whom Papa hired for no other reason in the world except because he was honest. He bears the cheerful name of Gaetano Allegri, and has an expression according, looking as perfectly happy as one could well imagine. But whatever his good qualities may be, he is certainly not brilliant, nor yet stylish. I wish you could see him when he comes, in one of Papa's coats, to announce dinner. He opens the door just a crack and swings forward into the room, balanced on one foot and holding on by the handle of the door. He then says, 'Pronto!' looks at us for a minute with a benevolent smile, and disappears. He is our cook and has learned to make chowder, fish-balls, and other American dishes.

Our chambermaid is quite a different character. She is a tall, middle-aged woman who walks over from Monticelli, a pretty little village in the neighborhood, every morning, has her breakfast, does her work, and goes back again. She was altogether ignorant when she first came, and we have made quite an accomplished woman of her, she being naturally a genius. I remember when I was trying to teach her how to make a bed, I took hold to help. But she put my arm back hastily, saying, 'Stop! Don't do that! You know what they say.'

‘No,’ said I, ‘what do they say?’

‘They say that if two make a bed, the youngest will die within the year. You are younger than I. But it is not true,’ she added, fearing she had alarmed me.

To tell the truth, our good Maria has her peculiarities. I believe geniuses generally do. Her manners are a queer mixture: half wild, half ceremonious. She makes beautiful courtesies, and a great many of them, and never speaks to me of Mr. Alexander, but always of His Lordship, your Papa. She has, however, an unfortunate habit of swearing, though she seldom says anything worse than ‘Holy Mother!’

So with this establishment, we set up house-keeping, in this queer old *Cinquecento* house. Of course it was not long before I made acquaintances with the little girls overhead. In less than a week we were the best of friends. There were three of them, of whom I must tell you, one by one.

The eldest was Eliza. She was eight years old and one of the most beautiful creatures that ever I saw. She had fine dark hair that never would keep braided nor fastened any way, but hung in great heavy folds on the side of her face. Her eyes were dark greyish blue, large and bright, with long, black eyelashes. Her features would have been beautiful cut in marble, and her expression, though it had a little touch of melancholy when it was still, was uncommonly lively



ELIZA TENNYSON

From an early pen and ink sketch by Francesca Alexander

and quick-changing when she spoke. She was very bright, too, and poetical. They say all the family are that. But she could speak in rhyme as fast as she could in prose, and she spoke such pretty Italian. She was, however, unfortunately both sensitive and high-tempered.

The second daughter was Emily. She was pretty, though not such a regular beauty, and she had a very sweet voice and a pleasant, easy temper. Her mother said she was the best of all the family, and I think, myself, she gave the least trouble. But when she *was* angry, it was a piece of work to pacify her. Still, with me she was gentle and quiet, and always ready to help me when I had anything to do.

But after all, I think little Matilda, the youngest girl, who was only four years old, was the best of the three. She was a delicate little thing, as bright as Eliza and as gentle as Emily. And as for temper, she had none. When the other girls were at school, she would walk all over the house and garden as quietly as a little bird, talking and singing to herself, and inventing little plays and playing them all alone, sometimes in her part of the house, sometimes in ours. And if she were tired, she would climb up into my lap, curl herself up like a little kitten, and go to sleep. If she had any fault, I should say she was a little too fond of teasing poor Eliza, who, being too tender-hearted to hurt a mosquito, always let loose her anger in a great storm of words, to the

great entertainment of her little sister. But I ought not to say anything against Eliza, for she was extravagantly fond of me. She was at school all day, and in the evening she would run on up the hill before Emily and the servant, so that she might be with me as soon as possible. I can imagine that I see her before me while I write, as she used to come from behind the bushes that grow in front of our house, in her little pink dress, looking hard into the twilight to see where I was, and as soon as she saw me, running straight into my arms as if she had not seen me for a year. Then Emily would come, in a rather cooler manner, and little Matilda was never far off. So we would go, all together, on to our back terrace, and play 'old man in the castle' or something equally lively.

Sometimes they used to act out an opera for my particular benefit. Or if the little girls were tired, we would sit down and tell stories, sometimes till late at night. For children do not keep such early hours here as they do with us, and you yourself might have been tempted to stay and let them stay till pretty late, especially when there was a full moon. It used to be so pleasant. Sometimes our amusements took a more sober character, and they used to ask me all sorts of questions about this world and the next which I was not very well able to answer.

To tell the truth, the poor children had been very much neglected and had strange ideas. One

Sunday evening I had been telling them about my grandmother—how good she was and how kind she was to me, and how she looked and dressed and spoke, and a great many things which I like to tell to children, when all at once Emily said, ‘Where is she now?’

‘In Heaven,’ said I, ‘up above the stars.’

At this they all looked at the stars, which were shining very thick overhead, as if they thought they could measure the distance with their eyes. And Emily said, ‘Oh, how high it is! Shall you ever go there?’

‘I hope so,’ said I, ‘I shall if I’m good.’

‘Oh, how glad you’ll be to see your grandmother,’ said she.

Another time Matilda asked me if fireflies did not belong to God. She said she thought they did; they were so good. Then Eliza wished to know if she could ever be good enough to go to Heaven, and when she found it was not impossible, she immediately set about it, and really became a great deal better before she went away. She said perhaps she and I might both be good and both die at the same time, and so meet, half-way to Heaven. She did not think we should know each other at first, with wings, but it would be very pleasant recognizing each other, and then making the rest of the journey together, and finally entering Heaven hand in hand. She fairly clapped her hands with delight when she thought of it. But at last my little children went

away, and the house was lonely enough without them. I suppose I shall never see them again, for the two eldest are going to school in Genoa, and little Matilda is to stay with her parents, who are now at the seaside. And now, Lucy, do write to me soon, and give my best love to Sarah and dear little Rose.

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny."

"Bellosguardo, December 29, 1857.

Dear Lucy:

What shall I tell you about? I have been living quietly at Bellosguardo. Last winter I was in Florence, confined almost altogether to the house. Georgina Putnam was very kind. She came to see me nearly every day, when I was well enough to see her, and indeed you can't think how much kindness I received from every one. The country girls from Bellosguardo used to come very often and bring me presents of fruit and flowers.

I must tell you about some of my contadine friends. The country people here live in the queerest little old stone houses. It doesn't seem as if they had built any new houses for hundreds of years. The people and the cattle live under the same roof, only in different rooms. As for the roof itself, it is generally of dark tiles, overgrown with yellow moss, and the eaves project far over the walls. The walls are very thick and

the windows very little, the chimneys very large and built in fanciful shapes. On the sunny side of the house there is usually a terrace,—a picturesque, rubbishy place where the old women do their spinning and the little girls make their straw braid.

The usual dress of the women is a chemise of coarse, homespun linen, a close-fitting bodice laced behind, a blue, homespun petticoat and a cotton handkerchief and apron. It does not sound very pretty, but it is very becoming to a graceful figure, and the better sort of contadine are very neat. You will seldom see a spot on their white sleeves. On Sundays and feast-days, they dress like Americans; only instead of bonnets they wear large hats of their own braiding. They wear a great deal of jewelry, especially coral and pearls, and they have not the least objection to wearing two necklaces at once.

They almost all have a fine form to the lower part of the face, but some of them have projecting cheek-bones, which make them look like Indians, and they are apt to injure their figures by working too hard. The handsomest women come from the mountains. I have seen some *montanine* who were almost perfectly beautiful,—face, figure, and all. It seems to me that almost all of these poor Tuscans have such sunny, happy natures that it quite makes up to them for all their poverty. I know a great many respectable girls, some very ladylike ones, who spend the

best part of their lives cutting grass and carrying it to the cattle. The cattle are kept shut up, and there are no pastures; and these girls say they like it.

They are always singing. By the way, some of their songs are quite pretty. I will sing you some when I go home. I have heard a brother and sister, working in different parts of the same farm, keep up a sort of conversation in singing. The young man would sing a verse, then the girl would answer with another. Sometimes two lovers, whose farms adjoin, will do the same thing. Perhaps, Lucy, I've written too much about these people. I cannot bring up to you, after all, a Tuscan farm, with its silver-grey olive trees and dark cypresses, and its little green foot-paths sprinkled with red-tipped daisies.

I have been having a Christmas tree for some of the little children. We had the room dressed with evergreen; it was very pretty. Do give my love to Sarah Barnard and little Rose. Please do write to me when you have time.

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny."

Aunt Lucia did not care for evening entertainments, but preferred to stay quietly at home with Uncle Alexander and Francesca. The invitations which they received to the many great balls given in Florence were rarely accepted, although occasionally Uncle Alexander would take Francesca to one, if it happened to be in some old palace which she wished to see in its gala

dress. She did not dance herself, but enjoyed watching the guests and being presented to some of the celebrities. Two of these balls she describes in her letters to Miss Lilly Cleveland.

“Bellosguardo, January 1, 1860.

Dear Lilly:

My best wishes for a Happy New Year to you. I can't tell you how happy it made me to hear that you thought of coming back to us. You say you are as happy now as you ever expect to be, but only come here and you shall be a great deal happier, if anything I can do will make you so. You would go around all the farms with me, and think how glad all the contadini would be to see you back again. Some evening in May you will go to San Vito with me and hear the women and children sing the litany, just after sunset, with the altar covered with candles and the bright light shining into their fresh country faces. And if you should ever become tired of country sights and sounds, the city will be very gay next Spring.

We are to have Prince Umberto here in the spring, our king's son, who is to be king himself one of these days, if he lives. And who knows but he might cut out the Prince of Wales! He is better looking, Lilly, really he is, and they say he is very good. The worst sin I ever heard laid to his charge was that he had a taste for firing off guns, and that is nothing very bad. Don't you think he would suit you? And then I know

you'll come and pass a day with me, just as you used to, and bring over Tennyson in your pocket. There is to be a great ball tonight in Palazzo Vecchio, and for a wonder I'm going. I will leave my letter open and tell you about it. . . .

January 2, 1861: I'm sure you must have been very much surprised to hear of my going to the ball, but to tell the truth, I could not resist the temptation to see the splendid old palace illuminated, for I never yet saw a palace to be compared to it. I always meant to see one of those great balls some time or other, and of course I would rather it should be in Palazzo Vecchio than anywhere else. It was a great deal finer than I expected. So many rooms, and all beautiful and all different. There was one room, an immensely large one, which had been fitted up for Leo X, when he visited Florence, and never altered since. It looked very grand and ancient, with frescoes by Giorgio Vasari (whom I like, though he is out of fashion now), and with such a great old-fashioned marble chimney-piece carved in *Cinquecento* style, but it was so high that one would have wanted a tall ladder to reach up to it. There were old busts in niches, and everything just as it must have been three hundred years ago. There was nothing else that pleased me quite so much as this room, though the refreshment room was very beautiful, hung all around with tapestries representing the stories of Esther.

There was a candelabra in this room which was very pretty, the candles having a great basket of flowers in the centre, and the rope, by which they were suspended from the ceiling, being entwined and quite covered with ivy. But there were so many flowers and so beautiful! All the rooms were full of them, and I believe all the gardeners about Florence were employed. As it was rather difficult at this season to find flowering plants, they had supplied the deficiency by taking plants not in blossom and tying flowers on to them. I was particularly struck with the beauty of one flowering shrub of a sort I had never seen before. On going to examine it, it proved to be a *camilia*, on which they had tied a number of white *giunchiglie*. But if I tell you so much about the decorations, I shall leave no room to tell you about the company, though to tell you the truth, I had seen people in ball dresses before, and I never saw anything like that old palace.

About half the people, at least half the gentlemen, were in uniform, which had a very brilliant effect, and some of them wore so many stars and crosses. I saw an old *Piemontese* general who had so many decorations he could hardly find room to hang them all, though he was a very large man indeed.

The prettiest lady present was a little American girl, a clergyman's daughter, with beautiful golden hair and an innocent, modest face, like a

saint. There were some very pretty Florentine ladies, too, and one quite beautiful English girl. There was an English officer, an old gentleman. I had never seen one, and his uniform puzzled me a good deal. I thought he was a Garibaldian, because he wore scarlet, until I heard him speak. I had the honor to be introduced to our Governor Ricasoli, very much to my surprise, for it was the last thing I should have thought of. But Mr. Brichieri, as he was walking through one of the rooms with me, saw the Governor's brother, whom he knows, and introduced me to him. He is a handsome old gentleman, and lives at *Mari-nogli*, not very far from us; and the first thing he proposed was to present me to the Governor. Of course I accepted most gladly, and he gave me his arm and conducted me across the room, Papa and Mr. Brichieri following, and I feeling so confused and astonished that I hardly knew what I was doing.

The Governor was standing behind a column, talking to several persons, and we had to wait a few minutes, so I had a good sight of him, and I know you will want to hear what he is like. He is not at all good-looking, and he has changed very much for the worse since I saw him a year ago. He is somewhat bent now, and looks very old and thin, but seemed to enjoy himself as well as anybody, talking with much animation and using his hands a good deal, in the Italian fashion. Pretty soon, when the others had finished,

the old gentleman who conducted me led me up and presented me. The Governor recognized my name at once and spoke to me so kindly that I was not at all frightened after the first minute. He is very polite and a little old-fashioned in his manner, but as unpretending as possible, and does not seem to remember that he is a Governor or in any way different from the rest of us. He was dressed quite plainly, with nothing to distinguish him from the other people present. After addressing a few words to me, he spoke to Mr. Brichieri and Papa, and I noticed that he looked very attentively at any one with whom he was speaking, and never lost a word that was addressed to him. He seemed, however, to be nearly blind. I do not think he sees anything that is not close to him. The last thing that he said was that he was coming to see us, which I repeat to you, as I think it well, to make the most of a promise which I am quite sure will never be fulfilled.

Among the other persons of celebrity present, Sir John Bowring was presented to me,—a fine-looking man but very aged and much bent. His wife was with him, a young and pretty lady whom he has just married. It seems horrid to me for a girl to marry such an old man, and yet they do it. You know Carolina Nardi said she would, if she could find an old gentleman who was rich and if it were not for Felice Pistolesi.

Do write to me soon again. Much love to your

Mamma, and tell her I hope she will bring you to me in the spring.

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny.”

“Bellosguardo, March 14, 1861.

Dear Lilly:

We are having a sweet early spring; the almond trees are all in blossom, and our house is always full of beautiful flowers. We have had the little Princes here. I was a little disappointed that there was no procession, and that the Princes proved to be two rather shy-looking little boys, with gray capes and hair brushed very smooth.

Prince Umberto is rather good-looking, with a fair fresh face and pleasant smile, but I liked the other the best, he was so little and looked so frightened and forlorn. He does not look more than twelve years old, though they say he is fifteen, and he has nothing pretty about him, excepting his hair, which looks very soft and fine.

They say he has some illness or other, but nobody seems to know what it is. He has a yellow, melancholy little face, and when he came in he held his head down, and made queer little bows to one side. The Governor came with them, also, a very large, stout man, who went everywhere with them while they stayed in Florence. They were much liked here, especially the elder,

though some of the *Codini* called them ugly, but every one agreed that they were very good, and well behaved.

One of my neighbors here is a very great *Codina*, and says the Florentines are all dead, that there is no masking this year worth going to see, and that our horrid government is at the bottom of it. You know, I suppose, that we are to have a great exhibition here in September, and I have taken it into my head to send something, myself. It seems a strange thing for me to do, does it not?

March 1st, it is, nearly a month now since I began this letter, and here I take it up again on the birthday of our good King. He is proclaimed King of Italy today, the Italians having concluded to make him a birthday present of their country. The cannon have been firing in the city this morning, and in the evening there is to be an illumination.

I am engaged now on my picture for the exhibition. It represents a Saint Agnese with her lamb, and I am doing it in pen and ink, for I do not paint well enough yet in colors.

I find myself making all sorts of plans for next May. I will tell you all the legends and sing you all the songs you wish to hear. We have had our garden put in order, and I think it will look very pretty in May. You and I must drink tea together once again on the terrace; my roses and jessamines will be all in blossom then. Do you

remember what a nice sideboard the terrace wall used to make? And now with love to you all,

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny Alexander.”

To Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

“Bellosguardo, April 6, 1861.

Dear Lucy:

I am very much obliged for your photograph, which still has a good deal of your old self, though grown very womanly, so that I did not recognize it at first; I thought it very pretty before I knew who it was, and prettier when I found out. And now I will tell you why I could not answer you before.

I do not know if you have heard of the great exhibition which we are to have here in September, but really it is going to be something very grand; our good Prince Eugenio is to be the president, and there will be contributions from every part of Italy. Now it was the first very ambitious thing I ever undertook, but I did want very much to send something of mine. That was why I could not write to you before: I had to give all my eyesight and attention to my drawing.

Saint Agnese was the subject I chose, sitting under an olive tree with her lamb: I have done her at last, and she looks very pretty, but my

heart rather fails me about sending it. I wish you could see the model I had for Saint Agnese, she was such a sweet little thing from the mountains. I never saw so much beauty of a certain kind as there is among the Tuscan mountain girls, all of the refined saintly sort: a handsome mountain girl looks always as if she had stepped out of an old altar piece. I have a great deal now which I should like to say to you, and I cannot, because there are two pictures which *must* be done this week, and I have been hard at work all the morning and my eyes are already tired. So with a great deal of love, and hoping to hear from you soon, I must leave my letter.

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny."

To Miss Lilly Cleveland:

"Bellosguardo, October 26, 1861.

Dear Lilly:

I do wish you could have been here this autumn. So much there has been to see; our beautiful exhibition, and the King and the Princes, and all the time such beautiful weather. Such a succession of bright warm days. One day Papa brought me an invitation to a ball at Palazzo Pitti, and he and Mamma were both so anxious that I should go, and it was really such a great temptation; (though I had never meant to go to any more balls) that I finally went under

Papa's care, and was very glad afterwards that I did, for I had a most delightful time, and was not nearly so tired afterwards as I expected.

We stood near the King for as much as an hour, and I had a chance to see not only how he looked but how he spoke and behaved. He was better looking than I thought, having lost the sunburn which used to make him look like a contadino, and besides he looked better with his hat off, as his forehead and hair are both handsome. He looked honest and determined, as we all know he is, but not in very good spirits. I had always heard that he had a '*viso giovale*,' but I am sure it was anything but that. He looked to me like quite an unhappy man, especially when he smiled, he had such a strange melancholy smile, and it came so seldom and was gone so soon. For the rest he was quite a contrast to the four or five old-fashioned Italians who were gathered about him, with their quick easy motions, and free use of their hands, and gentle, ceremonious manner. He stood upright and still, like a soldier on parade, and if he wished to look at anything in another direction, wheeled his whole figure around, as soldiers do in some of the exercises; without changing the position of his head or shoulders or hands. He was very erect, standing with his head a little thrown back, his hat in one hand and the other hanging straight down by his side. The principal thing remarkable about him was that he looked so won-

derfully in earnest. I think it would be impossible that he should ever make believe. As for his manner, I cannot call it condescending, it is too simple for that; he never appears to feel that there is any difference between himself and those whom he addresses.

No one seemed at all afraid of him, and no one used any particular ceremony towards him: I do not think he would have liked it if they had: He talked freely with all those around him, and seemed to work pretty hard trying to entertain his friends. Altogether he was as different as possible from my idea of a King, and yet there was a certain stateliness about him, something imposing in his very unconsciousness, where the eyes of so many hundred people were fixed upon him. For our King was the centre of attraction, as I need hardly say, and there was little dancing while he remained in the room.

Prince Eugenio was there. '*Biondo e bello, e di gentile aspetto*' like Manfredi; he looked quite grand in the collar of the Annunziata, and appeared to enjoy himself highly. Then there was General Fauti (whom you ought to like, as he is the liberator of Perugia), a tall, dark, very handsome man, stately in his manner and treated with much respect by every one, even by the King himself.

I have spent a good deal of time of course this autumn, at the exposition, but it is impossible even to begin to describe it. Still something I

must tell you. It is a wonderful sight. The palace is almost a little city in itself, and as for the productions of all sorts exhibited, they are so many and so beautiful they have even had the effect of making me more proud of this *bella Italia* than ever I was before, which is saying a great deal.

Our Florence shows for quite as much as any city, I am happy to say, and in some things, such as mosaics and straw braid, none of the others come near it. Milan sends beautiful silks and brocades, and so does Torino. Palermo, which I always supposed to be at the end of civilization, sends, I think, the finest '*lavori intarsiate*' (I do not know the English word, but you know what I mean); and even poor Venezia sends beautiful work in silver and in glass. The Republic of San Marino has a small round table all to itself, surmounted by a handsome blue and white silk flag, and containing one or two very small cheeses, a few specimens of wine and oil in little bottles, three or four minerals, and some quite pretty artificial flowers. The prettiest baskets were from some little out-of-the-way villages in Sicilia, and they were almost the prettiest I ever saw. I bought one pretty enough to make a picture of.

I do not know where the prettiest embroidery came from, almost all Italian ladies seem to have a natural gift for that kind of work, but that which interested me most was some not very

fine, yet sufficiently neat and pretty, done by the blind girls in the Asylum at Torino.

Mr. Pietro Romanelli, the husband of my good Mrs. Eliza, has sent a pretty figure of William Tell's son with the apple on his head, and, to the great satisfaction of us all, the King bought it, and paid a large price for it. Of course Mrs. Eliza has become more fond of the King than ever, if that is possible. The King and Prince Eugenio have bought largely at the exposition, and, so far as I can judge, with very good taste. Among the pictures, it seems to me they have bought nearly all the best ones.

Your uncle Mr. Charles Perkins' children, 'your children,' came to see me a short time ago. Eddie has grown so strong and handsome. May was very entertaining and sang me '*Padre Francesco*' and '*Italia malata*.' Carlino is now considered the beauty of the family, with his great dark eyes. With love to you all and a double portion for yourself,

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny Alexander."

To Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

"Bellosguardo, January 6, 1862.

Dear Lucy:

Your last letter was written in so much better spirits that it was quite a relief to me. For myself, I have enough to do with my painting, in which I improve steadily, though not so

fast as I could wish; but I must have patience. I am looking about now for a handsome old lady; the young contadine women are very pretty, but they grow terribly weather-beaten in their old age. Meanwhile, I am pretty well off for young subjects; pretty sunburnt country girls are plenty enough and as they all have bright eyes and red cheeks, I have no cause for complaint, though I do wish golden hair were not such a rarity: one can hardly paint saints without it.

There is one red-haired woman in the neighborhood, which makes a little variety with black and brown, but unfortunately she is very plain and not very young. Still, she is better than nothing. But I think I have written enough, even on such an interesting subject as myself and my own affairs, and besides, it is growing dark. Do write to me again and tell me all about yourself and how you are and what you are doing. Do tell me about your brother, too, and his wife; do you know you forgot to tell me who she was? You must remember that I do not hear the American news out here: except, of course, the public news, which I could excuse. I am glad I am away from America now; it was bad enough when the war was going on here. And now with much love from Mamma as well as myself, believe me, dear Lucy,

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny Alexander."

Extracts from some letters from Francesca to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Bellosguardo, September 11, 1863.

Dear Lilly:

I am very busy now painting Cinderella. I do wish you could see my old chimney. I have to go down to an old farmhouse, some way off, to paint it. The road I have to walk in is one of the prettiest in Tuscany: the olive trees hanging over the wall, the autumn roses in the hedges, the little white butterflies among the yellow thistles, and the view of the Val d'Arno and the mountains coming in sight at every turn of the road.

After Gigia and I arrive, I soon establish myself at an easel in such a queer, picturesque old kitchen with a Madonna in a niche and a very little window covered with vine leaves, and a chimney which looks as if it must have been built as far back as Giotto's time at least, with a seat in the corner on purpose for Cinderella to sit on. When Paolina seats herself there, I feel as if Cinderella was before me. The 'cross sisters are to be introduced just setting off for the ball. . . .”

“Villa Brichieri, November, 1863.

Dear Lilly:

We were all delighted with your letter giving us such an interesting account of your journey. Now perhaps you would like to hear of

a piece of good fortune which has happened to me.

Mrs. Gardner from Boston, who is spending a few months here, has given me an order for a large picture, larger than I ever painted yet. It is to represent two contadine arranging some flowers before a Madonna. The price which I am to receive for this picture will be enough to last all the poor people for a great while, and the very next day after I received this order, a letter came from Bessie Mason, enclosing, for the benefit of the poor, a larger sum than I ever received before at one time.

We have had and are having dreadful weather, with continued rain for many days. The Arno has overflowed, as well as most of the smaller streams; the greater part of the valley, as I see it from my window, is under water, in some places eight braccia deep. The poor terrified people have gone up onto the roofs of the houses for safety, and the Government is sending boats. Last night *Ponte Vecchio* was considered in danger; the water filled its arches and almost swept over it, but the dear old bridge kept its place as it has done for five hundred years. . . .”

“December 31, 1863.

We had a delightful Christmas. It was a beautiful sunny day, with roses all in bloom in the garden. We had over sixty contadini. I wish you could have seen the presents they

brought me. There were so many, we arranged them on the billiard table, and that was quite covered. There were twelve bunches of flowers, and as for the lemons, apples, and pears, and the baskets of figs, one could not even pretend to count them. The tree was very pretty, and I think I spent your money to advantage. It bought a great many pretty things, which certainly gave a great deal of pleasure. Carolina Pistolesi's youngest little girl had a very ugly cat with ferocious green eyes which, as it could be made to mew in a loud and harsh voice, was more admired than anything else on the tree.

I had almost forgotten to tell you what was the prettiest present I had for Christmas. It was from Mamma. It was a little old Latin prayer-book bound in silver most beautifully wrought. It is very ancient and looks like Genoese work, and I never saw any binding half so pretty. . . .”

CHAPTER III

ABETONE

AMONG the many descriptions written of the Alexanders' life in Italy, and their work among the poor, was one by Mr. W. J. Stillman which was published in the *London Critic*. We give some extracts from it here, because it describes so well the life at Abetone, although it was published at a later date after Ruskin's enthusiastic admiration and praise of Francesca's work had made her famous. Mr. Stillman writes:

“The valley in the Apennines, where I passed the summer of 1883, is the valley to which Ruskin alludes, in his lecture on the realistic schools of painting of England, where he says that Miss Alexander, ‘the American girl,’ of the lecture, has lived with her mother among the peasants of Tuscany. Into this valley came Mrs. Alexander and Francesca twenty years ago, and settled for the summer at the head of it, where there was no habitation more dignified than the little cottage which they still keep and in which they have passed the summers ever since. Close by has grown up a summer resort known from the contiguous fir forest and forestry of the Italian Government as the Abetone, a cool and bracing retreat 4000 feet above the sea. The hotels are mainly frequented by Italians; a few Americans and English who habitually reside at Florence find their way thither. But not enough to give foreign color to the immigration and spoil the people by alms-giving, purse-pride, and extravagance. The folk of the valley, therefore, keep much of their simplicity and, though never in squalid poverty, are rarely much forehanded as to worldly matters. They merit, on the whole, the sincere attachment the Alexanders

have for them and which they reciprocate, adding to it a reverence which would be impossible to the generation coming on.

“In this secluded region of the Apennines, where her daily walks enable her to look down on one side on the wide plains of the valley of the Po, the old duchy of Modena, and on the other over the wild valley of the Lima with its rolling sea of chestnut groves, extending as far as the eye can reach, down to where the mountains overlook Pistoia, one of the most luxuriant distances that Italy affords, yet wild and romantic, with its villages perched upon the almost inaccessible hillsides and tops. Miss Alexander has passed her summer months in cultivation of the most primitive nature and the most uncorrupted humanity one can find in the hills of Italy, doing what good she can to her people, and getting what return she can from the flowers and the hills, a life of active devotion and practical religion, in which she both worships and is worshipped. To her people, she is already canonized, and as their simple ways do not compass the power of healing which her broths and herb-teas, her nursing and her watching have, they have grown to regard her as a miracle-worker, and the effect of her prescriptions as due to a divine grace, beyond all relation to the *Materia Medica*. They bring their sick to her as to the apostles of old, simply believing that she may say, ‘Be healed,’ and it shall be done for them.

“Miss Alexander was born in Boston and her parentage on both sides belongs to families for two hundred years resident in New England. Her father was a well-known portrait painter in Boston, and, coming to Florence, as all true artists do, or wish to for a time, he brought Francesca. As the years have gone by, she has grown into Italian life like a slip of free and unconventional America on an Old-World stem, keeping all the originality and individuality of her birthright, scarcely modified by the mellower and riper atmos-

phere of the world she lives in. Her birthplace is her pride, and her only possible home is Italy.

“ ‘What she is,’ said Mrs. Alexander to me the other day, ‘she owes to my sainted mother.’ But we think that perhaps Mrs. Alexander is too filial, and I should modify her sentence by a little of the sainted mother’s child, for Francesca seems to me to have been moulded by her mother. When she first began to draw, her father said that her ways were her own and that she must follow them by her own light. He would not interfere. That she has done so her work shows. Execution, qualities of texture, manner of working and of regarding her subject, all are *sui generis*. Drawing with a pen, she begins at one corner of her drawing, be it a head, a figure, or a flower, and goes through it, finishing as she goes with a most elaborate rendering of the minutest details, texture and local color as translated into white and black, and in her flowers (which are to me her most delightful work) happy sympathy with the plant and exquisite taste in rendering its forms. Her eyesight is abnormally keen and her patience and delicacy of touch unsurpassed; and in its way I do not believe her flower-drawing has ever been surpassed if equalled.”

The following letter is written to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Abetone, August 2nd, 1862.

Dear Lilly:

I imagine that when you open this letter your first question will be, ‘Where is Abetone?’ And as I am quite sure you will never find out by looking at any map, I may as well tell you before I go any further, that it is one of the blue mountains behind Pistoia which you and I have looked at so often together from our window at

Bellosguardo (I should have said my window, but I wrote ours before I thought. It always seems half yours), and that we have come here to pass a few weeks of the warm weather. Last night about sunset, Papa and Mamma were going down to the post office to see if there were any letters or papers from Florence. I said, 'Do bring me back a letter from Lilly,' and sure enough they brought me one, to my great delight, as you can well imagine.

I always wished to see the Pistoiesi mountains, where most of the country songs and *stornelli* come from, and where I had heard the finest race of people in Tuscany were to be found; so, altogether, I set out on the journey more willingly than I ever set out on a journey before. And what a beautiful journey it was! First through the lovely Val d'Arno full of quiet farms, where the harvest was just ended. And then Pistoia, and then the winding road up the mountains among endless groves of chestnut trees and little ancient looking villages that always appeared inaccessible; and such splendid views at every turn!

A little after sunset we came to the beginning of the fir woods which give the place its name. And in half an hour or more, we were at the door of the large half-inhabited old house where we have since been staying. My dear Lilly, you told us in your letter that you were staying at 'quite a countrified place.' I wonder what you would

think of this! An immense extent of woods, of beech and fir, a few little patches of cultivation which do not deserve to be called farms, a dozen very old stone cottages with slated roofs, little windows, and great chimneys, straggling for a couple of miles along a beautiful road, the Government road to Modena; great unfenced pastures grown over with bushes, where beautiful wild-looking cattle are guarded by girls in gold earrings, who knit at the same time; wonderful mountain peaks about us, and deep valleys with steep wooded sides, and little streams, very cold and clear, dashing among the great fallen rocks at their bottom. Imagine all this, and you will have no very bad idea of Abetone.

As for the simple and few inhabitants of the place, they are of the most primitive description,—kind, honest, gentle, and sociable, mostly relatives of each other, and all friends, and excessively proud of their mountain country. It is impossible to live among them without growing fond of them. To my surprise, they seem somewhat more enlightened and intelligent than the country people about Florence. Understand me, I don't mean more modernized, but they seem quicker of comprehension, more thoughtful and more imaginative. They speak much purer Italian, and, above all, their religion seems to be more of a reality and less of a form.

They are poorer than the *contadini* about Florence but at the same time more independent,

for all those who do not live on the Government land own their fields, such as they are, and are thus saved from a great temptation to dishonesty. They are fine-looking people, usually with some resemblance to each other; they have beautifully formed oval faces, and almost always large soft eyes, rather long straight noses, and very pretty mouths; curling hair is common among them, and, for the most part, they have fresh complexions and white teeth. As for their manner, they are not so ceremonious as the Florentines, nor so cultivated, but their simplicity and good nature are quite as pleasing in another way, especially as they almost all have sweet voices, and a grand and poetical style of language.

One great pleasure has been the finding of Beatrice di Pian degli Ontani, the celebrated improvisatrice, one of whose *rispetti* I send you enclosed for your journal. The way we found her was odd enough. I believe you have that most delightful book '*Canti Popolari Toscani*' and if you have, you will certainly remember in the preface the account of this remarkable woman, and the beautiful *ottava* of her composition, which is introduced and which ends:

*'E il sole se ne va via Pian piano
Ch'io ne debbo partir da Cotigliano.'*

Now, as we were on our way to this place, a lit-

the old village beautifully situated among steep hills covered with chestnuts, like all the country about three miles below us (for we are above the region of chestnuts here) was pointed out to us as Cotigliano, and immediately Beatrice's *ottava* came into my mind. Papa being interested in the *ottava*, made some inquiries, and told me afterwards that Beatrice was still living, and the landlord had offered to send for her if we would like to see her. But I set my heart on seeing Beatrice in her own home, and Papa and Mamma, who are always ready to content me in anything reasonable or unreasonable, willingly undertook to go with me to Pian degli Ontani; though the way was very long and rather difficult, we had to go on foot; up and down a little mountain path, which was very beautiful, and which I would like to describe to you, if I had time which I have not.

We were pretty near being lost once or twice, but we were directed, once by a man who was picking wild raspberries and once by a charcoal-burner cooking a kettle of polenta, until at last, when we were on top of the hill, a stranger who came along pointed out Pian degli Ontani in the distance. So, having rested a few minutes, we recommenced our scramble, holding on to the trees and bushes and letting ourselves down from one great stone to another as well as we could. After some time we found ourselves at the bottom of a deep and narrow ravine, through

which a little river, as clear as crystal, descended in a series of quiet pools and bright noisy cascades from one great rock to another. The name of this beautiful river is Sestaione, or Sostaione. I have heard it pronounced in both ways. After this, the way to Pian degli Ontani was not so difficult, but why it should be called a plain I cannot think. It is a very steep hillside, and the alders, from which it takes its name, have to be held on to in the more slippery places.

Beatrice's house was a common, stone-built farmhouse standing among a few cherry-trees in a green field, which sloped away so rapidly to the Sestaione that one could not see the little river, though one could hear its sound distinctly. Beyond the river, the mountain range rose abruptly, a magnificent wall of woods and rocks until, as the river took a turn, a wonderful view was opened down the valley, with mountain behind mountain, apparently without end. I remember Beatrice's line,

'La montagna è stata a noi maestra.'

In the little patch of corn and potatoes near the house stood an infirm-looking old man. He took little notice of us until we spoke to him and then, from his almost unintelligible answer, we discovered that he was paralytic. He appeared, however, to have the use of his mind, and after several trials, he finally succeeded in making us

understand that Beatrice was making hay. That was all we could make out. To all our questions as to where she was, he would only answer, '*A far il fieno.*'

So we set off down the steep hill and pretty soon a man whom we met undertook to make Beatrice come to us; so he whistled very loud and shrill, until he had attracted her attention, and then called her. And Beatrice, throwing down her rake, came running up the hill towards us. I went a few steps to meet her, wondering what she would be like. I remembered that in the book I had read she was described as 'not pretty,' and I was afraid she would be a very frightful old woman. So it was quite a relief when she came near and I saw what she really was. I don't know how any one could say she was not handsome.

Of course I can't say what she may have been in her youth, but now at sixty years of age, Beatrice is certainly a very pretty woman. She says that she is sixty, but she looks at least ten years younger. Her eyes are her great beauty,—large, dark, and brilliant, full of fire. I did not wonder that Tommaseo called them *inspired*. For the rest of her face, she has a pretty, straight little nose, rather strongly marked eyebrows, and a mouth so sweet in expression that I really cannot say whether it is pretty or not. One never notices the shape of it. She is very brown,—that I cannot deny. And her skin has



A CONTADINA AT THE WELL
From an early pencil drawing by Francesca Alexander

become polished through long exposure to weather, but she has plenty of color in her cheeks still. I suppose this sunburn may have prevented an Italian from discovering her beauty.

She is perhaps the last woman in Toscana who still wears the old-fashioned red bodice. She says it belongs to the old times, and so she wears it, much regretting that others have laid it aside, for she says nothing else is so pretty, in which I quite agree with her. Her head is always covered with a handkerchief, from under which her beautiful gray hair falls in natural curls about her face. She was delighted to see us and immediately fell in love with Mamma, and entered into an animated conversation with her.

But by this time the old paralytic man had tottered after us, and Beatrice presented him to us as her husband. He stood leaning feebly on his stick and seemed to take a faint sort of pleasure in watching us. Beatrice's conversation was very beautiful. She had the unconscious simplicity of a child, and took no pains to conceal her delight at the compliment we had paid her in coming to look for her, and told us with great glee how the Cavalier Giliani or some such name had come to hear her sing, and how he was a '*gran*' Signore.'

But if there was no affectation of modesty about her, there was also no attempt to show off, or to keep up her character by talking poetically. It is true that a great deal of her language is

poetry without rhyme, but she herself was not aware of it. Her most peculiar habit was that of hardly ever stating any fact without saying after it, '*Grazie a dio.*' After telling us how she had lost three children and how much she had suffered in consequence, she added, '*Grazie a dio!* He sends us nothing without a reason, don't you think so?' and she looked at me. Her husband often interrupted her. When he did so, she listened attentively, and then repeated or rather translated his words to us. She seemed very fond of her '*povero uomo.*' One thing was certain: Beatrice had never been *taught* manners of any sort. Natural refinement and good feeling more than supplied all deficiencies. But there was no attempt to be proper, no false shame, no hesitation about receiving us on terms of perfect equality, and being at ease herself, of course she made every one else so. We did not leave her until I had fixed a day for her to come and sit for her picture. And as the picture took two days, I had plenty of time to become acquainted with her, and she on her part became confidential, and told me all her history.

As it is not a long one, I will write a little account of it to you. Her mother died when she was two or three years old and her father, who had several children, never married again. He was a mason, and Beatrice, when a girl, used to be employed in carrying stones for him. In the winter they always went to the Maremma and in

the spring returned to the mountains. And so they did until she married her *povero uomo*. After this she tended sheep, but her husband, who was fond of her, never made her work very hard, and in course of time she had eight children, all good and handsome and intelligent. But she had troubles. Indeed, to use her own words, one trouble never waited for the other.

First, the Sestaioni rose and carried away their little old home, which was afterwards replaced by the one among the cherry trees. Then she lost her baby and in consequence went down to Florence as a nurse, and was almost smothered by the air, and glad enough to come back again. She lost two more children, especially mourning her oldest son Peppino, who was as good as an angel, and a poet like herself. She can never speak of Peppino without tears. And then another son was taken in the conscription. And that, she says, was the greatest sorrow of all her life. 'My heart,' she says, 'is between two stones for that child!'

This son has been at the taking of Messina and is now fighting the brigands. And last of all, about six months ago, her poor old husband was struck with paralysis.

With regard to this last misfortune, she cannot feel much, she says, like complaining. She is so thankful that the old man's life was spared. She shall always feel happy, she says, as long as his life is spared, even in his present condition.

And for the rest, they own the hayfield and the home and three cows besides. And they have no debts. And she has no wish even to be better off. She hardly thinks on the whole that she should like to be a great lady.

This history she told me herself, and I will only add to it that she is much respected and admired, and that she still composes beautiful *ottave*. I have set down several from her dictation, and she asked me to send a pretty one to the Signorina di Perugia, and I chose the little *rispetto*, which I enclose. That you may understand it, I ought to tell you that the country people call all mountains *Alpe*, and that the mountains above the region of trees are covered with little white flowers shaped like stars and having a perfume like honey. The last two lines she added for you, and I made her sign it with a cross, for she cannot write or read either. I told her once that it was strange that she could compose such beautiful poetry and yet not be able to write it down. To which she replied, 'Writing has nothing to do with poetry. One may write without being a poet. Poetry is the gift of God.' Her mind was full of all beautiful ideas. She knows enough poetry to fill many volumes, and can quote an appropriate verse for any subject that is mentioned. But I must now leave Beatrice.

Your next letter will find me, I hope, at home, looking down on Bella Firenze. But I shall al-

ways hope to come back some time again to this beautiful country, of which my letter will give you but a very imperfect idea. And now with love to all, believe me

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny Alexander.”

In the following story of Abetone, Francesca describes the little committee for the wounded during the War of 1866:

“During the war of 1866 for the liberation of Venice, I think that almost every town and city in Italy had its ‘Committee for the Wounded.’ In Florence all the great ladies were making lint and bandages, and receiving contributions in money, linen and medicine. And at l’Abetone, high up among the Apennines, where I was spending that summer, as I have many of the happiest summers in my life, there were two or three poor, good little girls, who wanted to do their part, too, for their dear Italy, and for those who suffered, whether friends or enemies. And they did not see why they should not have a committee, as well as the great ladies in Florence; of whom so much was told in the one newspaper which the postman brought from Pistoia, late in the afternoon, and which was borrowed and read, during the next twenty-four hours, by every one in the little settlement who could read, and listened to with anxious interest by those who could not.

So the poor girls appointed an hour every day at which to meet and carry on their charitable work. And gradually mothers and aunts and friends began to be interested, as what they had looked upon as play proved to be really serious work, and to produce considerable results. And one or another would come in often and give us an hour's work and tell a story or sing a song to make the work go faster. I say us, because I had the honour to be a regular member of the committee. Indeed, I was treasurer, and had charge of the basket of linen, and received the contributions.

The girls were indefatigable: five or six hours they would work in a day without stopping even a minute to rest. If it sometimes occurred to me to ask if they were not tired, I was met always by the same unvarying and unanswerable question: 'And if those poor soldiers, who are fighting for our liberty, should begin to say, "We are tired," what would become of us?'

Certainly the fatigue would have been extreme if we had not provided ourselves with some amusement. To pass the time more pleasantly, each of the young workwomen was expected to bring every day a story for the entertainment of her companions, which she told while at her work. And in the intervals between the stories we used to sing, sometimes grand old hymns, left by the Capuchin missionaries who from time to time cross these mountains and preach in the

various villages, sometimes plaintive little love songs, grown up (one can hardly say composed) among the mountain people themselves; full of passionate feeling and strange conceits, and sung to sad minor tunes, that seemed as old as the hills, and as wild; sometimes again interminable ballads in *ottava rima*, or more modern and lively songs about Italy and Garibaldi, picked up from returned soldiers.

Most of the songs I wrote down, and many of the stories I can still remember. And I have thought that some of them might be interesting, if printed in English, for their very novelty, and as specimens of a literature that is rapidly dying away.

Perhaps I ought, however, to tell a little where l'Abetone is, and what it is like. It is a little group of houses—one cannot call it a village—on the high road between Tuscany and Modena, and stands a few yards from what used to be the boundary line dividing those two states. Pietro Leopoldo, in whose reign the road was made, built the plain little church, which serves for all the country for miles around, and the priest's house next to it, and the custom-house and post-office, now degenerated into a tavern, and kept by Nando, as the neighbors irreverently call Sig. Ferdinando Ferrari, the principal man, perhaps, in the place. It is said that Pietro Leopoldo, wishing that these remote mountain districts

should be inhabited, gave grants of land to induce families to settle there.

I should imagine that he sent very few families to Abetone, to judge by the very small variety in family names. They were nearly all either Zani or Ferrari, and the two families had intermarried until almost every one in the place was related to every one else. A beautiful place it was, on the very ridge of the Apennines, four thousand feet above the level of the sea, with its pure air, and its numberless fountains of clear cold water, its pastures so full of flowers, and its immense old woods of fir and beech. All about it rose the mountain summits, on which patches of snow would linger almost all summer, and the grand white clouds would come down and rest upon them, looking close at hand, as they never do on the plain.

The inhabitants were mostly shepherds and charcoal-burners, kind, friendly people, it used to seem to me, who tended each other's babies, fed each other's children, and drove home each other's stray cattle, quite as a matter of course.

They were fine-looking people, with noble and gracious manners, and a singularly poetical way of expressing themselves in conversation. Once a year, on the feast of S. Leopoldo, they all met together at the church and had a 'procession' to carry the relics of the saint. The only trouble about this procession was that, as everybody took

part in it, there was no one to see it, and it might have merited a large number of spectators.

First came all the women; Madam Betta Ferrari at the head, carrying the banner, because she was the oldest woman in the place. She was eighty-five when I last saw her, and yet, if I should call her an old woman, I should be giving quite a false idea of her. I think that she was the most beautiful woman in that part of the country: tall, and erect, with a fair fresh colour, and a singularly bright and happy smile; with brilliant dark eyes, and hair that had been golden, so old people told me, but which was now snow white, though still retaining the bright gloss of youth, and hanging in natural and abundant curls over her forehead and about her noble face. But what gave a peculiar brilliancy to her appearance, was the fact that while her hair was so white, her long, heavy eyelashes were still of the deepest black. Truly she was a magnificent woman, the mother of nine children, and grandmother of half the settlement. She went first, as I said, dressed in black, with white embroidered veil and apron, carrying the banner surmounted by the cross, with a grown-up granddaughter on each side. Then came all the women, two at a time, all in their Sunday dresses of bright colours; even the little girls of seven or eight years came out to do honour to San Leopoldo. Next walked the priest, in yellow brocade, carrying the relics in their case of faded

gilding, under a canopy, also of yellow brocade, borne by four of the principal men of the parish, in white dresses, and two or three other priests, invited for the occasion from the nearest towns, walked on each side, with old silver incense-burners. And then came the men and boys, bare-headed and reverential in velvet jackets, with waistcoats and handkerchiefs of every shade of brilliant colour.

And the sound of the psalms, chanted in those clear mountain voices, floated far away into the still air, and the perfume of the incense mingled with that of the fir woods, as the little procession moved slowly down the road under the trees, now in sunshine and now in shadow, to return again in a few minutes and replace the relics for another year's rest under the altar.

This was their *festa*: for the rest, the working-day life of these people was sober enough. The men, until they became quite old, went every winter to work in the Maremma, and some of them were always tempted by the hope of gain to stay too late into the spring; and would come home with malaria fever to die, or to hang about for years, yellow and shivering. When at home, they would be much occupied in burning charcoal, the principal merchandise of those mountains.

On Monday morning a man would leave his home with a bag of meal and an iron kettle to make *polenta*. He would take up his lodging on

some remote mountainside, where the beech woods had been lately cut down, and for the next week his friends and neighbors would have no sign of his existence beyond the sight of a faint distant column of smoke, rising from his charcoal bed. If, as was most likely, there were other charcoal-burners near him, they would entertain each other, in the long nights of watching, with singing, and not unfrequently one of them would be a poet, and improvise verses by the hour together.

How I wish, in ending my account of the Committee for the Wounded, I could introduce the little Abetone girls to you one by one, and tell you all their songs and stories!" . . .

Francesca had begun writing a collection of these stories, but it was left unfinished.

To Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Bellosguardo, October, 1862.

Dear Lilly:

How glad I am to date this letter Bellosguardo! There is certainly no place like home. I do not know whom I was most sorry to leave at Abetone, but I think the one who was most sorry to have us come away was Beatrice. Papa said, ‘Beatrice, you must sing us an *ottava* to take leave of us.’

It seemed to me quite solemn—the solitary place, the grand mountain ridges all about us, as

Beatrice, bidding us stand, so that she could see all at once, stood quite still with her eyes on the ground for a moment. And then, with that peculiar lighting up of the face which always came with her *ottava*, she sang such a beautiful *adieu*. She made it up as she went along, of course, but it was so full of feeling and so simply and so naturally expressed, that I cannot tell you the effect it had on all of us. Then after many tears and good wishes, she left us, wiping her eyes as she walked up the steep, narrow path, and in a few minutes was out of sight. I was sorry, after all, when the time came to leave Abetone, where we had passed such a happy summer.

But as our *vettura* passed down the beautiful winding road, and as we came first to the chestnut trees, then to the grape-vines, after a long time to a fig tree and finally, best of all, to a few poor frost-bitten olives, I found my spirits rising as the road descended, and I felt that I was approaching home. It was evening when we reached our own home, which looked remarkably large and handsome after the low, half-furnished rooms in the old custom-house.

And then came two or three most happy weeks, as you can well imagine,—visiting friends, going over old walks, receiving congratulations and baskets of fruit from the *contadini* (who called us *poverino* and gave us more figs than we could eat, because they said we had been so long without any), and being generally considered as per-

sons who had passed through a considerable amount of danger and difficulty.

One of the first friends whom I visited was that very stately and quiet one, the marble archbishop in San Francesco, whom I always find more companionable than most living people. It was a happy day for me when I found myself once again sitting by his side and looking at his kind, thoughtful, saintly old face always turned a little towards me, as it lies on the rich pillow. Of course I read over the Latin epitaph, which I always do, though I cannot make much out of it except that his name was Menozzo de Federighi, that he was Bishop of Fiesole, that he died in 1450, and that he was the most upright of men, which last part no one can doubt who looks at him. I am indebted to your uncle, Mr. Charles Perkins, for telling me that this most splendid monument is the work of Lucca della Robbia, one of his very few works in marble.

We have had a great subject of interest here, and indeed all through the country, in the marriage of our little Princess Pia to the King of Portugal. Everybody loved this little princess, who was just as good as her sister Clotilde, and a great deal prettier, to judge from her photograph, which Papa brought me home one day. And what splendid presents she had! Our city of Florence gave her a cup made of a single and very beautiful piece of white agate, with a golden dragon with diamond eyes twisted about the

stem, and our *Gonfaloniere*, the Marchese Bartolomei, went on to Torino to present it. I never heard the particulars but I hope he wore his official dress, in which he looks so grand and handsome.

Napoli sent a complete set of pink coral, in which you know the Neapolitans work so beautifully. Genova sent a bust of the bride's ancestor, Carlo Alberto, which, by the way, I should not think she would have wanted, to judge from those portraits of the old gentleman which I have seen. The Pope, who is her godfather, sent her, they say, a splendid reliquary and a rosary of pearls and diamonds.

The Roman Liberali sent a set of ornaments in Roman gold, comprising everything that would have been given to a bride in the ancient times of the Empire. These were bought and sent off secretly, for though the Pope sent a present to the young lady himself, he considered it treasonable for any one else to do so.

Torino presented an album containing views of all the places among which the Princess Pia had passed her childhood. The Emperor Napoleon sent a crown of diamonds, and the Empress a dress of valenciennes lace. The poor Venetian emigrants had not much to give, but they gave two volumes of poetry, as a token of good will. Palermo sent a statue, L'Innocenza, which I saw at the *Esposizione* last year, and which was a very pretty thing. The King gave

her a fortune in diamonds. I think she was his favorite child. She was the youngest and the prettiest, and of a most amiable character. But Bologna outdid all the others, and left them a great way behind. It sent a beautiful Madonna and Child, *an original by Francia!* That was the only present of them all which made me feel for a moment as if I should like to be in the Princess' place.

I wish you would tell me what people on that side of the water think of this horrible American war. How long do they think it will last? The poor straw-bonnet makers here are starving because the trade with America is stopped. And for the first time in my life, I believe, I see industrious people in want of bread. There has been some talk of a war here in the spring, for the liberation of Venezia, but I believe it has been given up, for which I am thankful.

Everybody feels low-spirited here about Rome, which we are not likely to have for the present. The other day in one of the small rooms at the Pitti, I saw a fresco, apparently of the last century, representing Rome with the line underneath, '*Nulla puo durar se manca Roma.*'

I was startled, for it sounded like a prophecy. The other day as I was passing Casa Guidi, where poor Mrs. Browning lived, I saw that some of her Florentine admirers had put up a marble slab on the wall with an inscription which I thought very beautiful. I will try to

copy it, as I think you would like to paste it in your album where you have her autograph, and her beautiful poem on Villafranca. Lizzie Boot sends her love to all of you. Do write to me soon and tell me if there is any chance of your returning to our *Bella Firenze*. How happy such a prospect would make me!

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny Alexander."

In a letter to Miss Lilly Cleveland, Francesca writes the story of how she sent a petition to the King. An old woman named Beppa, a stranger to Francesca, came to her one day in great distress, saying, "They are going to take my son away in the conscription."

The year before, he had married a poor orphan girl of seventeen, and he was his wife's and mother's only support. When Francesca went to see them, she found that the poor woman's son had been taken away and that his wife, whose baby was born only a few days before, was lying dangerously ill. Unless help came to them, her baby would have to be sent to the Foundling Hospital. Francesca writes:

"A distinguished lawyer undertook to send a petition to the King, but the King never answered it—probably never received it. The Gonfaloniere of Florence sent a petition to the Minister of War, also without success. The young wife gradually pledged all her ornaments, then her bed-quilt and her Sunday dress of wool. Then a thought occurred to me. Why should not I write to the King and tell him all? It was simply the last chance, and I would not let the



A CONTADINA AND HER CHILD

From a pen drawing by Francesca Alexander

poor girl starve, or send her baby to the Foundling Hospital. I took Mamma into my confidence and she proposed that I should enclose a likeness of Carolina and her baby.”

Francesca consulted the wife of the Prefect, the Marchesa Torricessa, who helped her write her letter to the King. A kind priest named Martelli sent word that he also would write a petition, and advised Francesca to take advantage of the King's being in Florence, for a month, and send her petition while he was there. Francesca continues:

“The King was recalled suddenly to Torino. We heard that he was going just in time to have our petition and the picture placed in his hands; which was done by the Marchese della Stufa, to whom I shall always feel most thankful. Before the King went away, he ordered our petition sent to the Minister of War; who never did anything about it; but our good kind King sent poor little Carolina sixty francs, which I had to go with Papa to receive from the King's secretary. He was such a handsome, stately old gentleman, and he received us in a room that looked out on a little garden, of which I wanted to make a picture, and hope I shall some time from memory.

He made me sit in an armchair of gold and velvet while he wrote something for me to sign, and folded up the gold pieces in white paper. He showed me my picture, which he said the King had chosen to keep for himself, and had ordered sent on to Torino. The next day I had to go to

Monticelli and put Carolina into possession of more gold than she probably ever saw before. The poor little thing was quite bewildered with such a fortune, so she was able to redeem all her things. By this time, her story had become known to many. She received much sympathy and assistance and thinks that she will be able to support herself and the baby. . . .”

“I wrote you of the King’s being called to Torino, but have not written you about his arrival in Florence. Such a reception he had as no King ever had before. I told you that with the conscription and some other misfortunes which the Piedmontese have brought on this poor country, the Florentines have all turned Codini. When the King left the railway station behind Santa Maria Novella, there was not one *evviva*. No one, it is said, took his hat off except the King himself. He passed through the streets in a dead silence until he reached Piazza Pitti, where a silent crowd waited to receive him. A terrible contrast it must have seemed to that first entrance into Florence, which you remember as well as I do. But whatever he may have felt, he showed no displeasure, but entered the Palace with that unmoved military air of his, just as usual. But when he was once out of sight, the better feelings of the crowd began to get the upper hand. A few voices raised an ‘*Evviva il re!*’ Then the others joined, and the cry was

repeated several times. The King came out on the balcony, bowed to the people, and stood leaning on the railing and looking down at them. At that moment it seemed as if all the old affection for Vittorio Emanuele returned into the hearts of the Florentines. All hats were taken off. There was a tremendous shouting and from that time the King and the people have been friends. . . .”

To Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Abetone,
July 3rd, 1863.

Dear Lilly:

I have not yet heard from you since I sent you that hurried note from Florence. I expect to commence my work as soon as I finish my letter. I have already engaged three sitters. One of the three is Beatrice. She came to see us the first morning after our arrival. She is a good deal changed, having had much trouble since we parted, but was delighted to see us, and kept me all the morning writing *ottave* from her dictation. She looked as handsome as ever, after an hour spent in composition, and I think I shall try to make her sing a little while I paint her, just that I may catch the peculiar light and fire of her eyes. Some of the *ottave* she gave me are very beautiful, especially three which related to her son, who is a soldier engaged in fighting the brigands away in the south.

Another of my sitters is a pretty little shepherdess of the Modenese country (of which, you know, we live on the borders), whom I think I shall paint sitting under a beech tree, with a few sheep about her. She is a perfect little beauty, with such eyes as I know you would delight in. Only no one can ever tell what color they are. They change so in different lights. But I know they are like two drops of water for clearness, and shaded by perhaps the longest black eye-lashes which I ever saw.

And this morning I found another almost as pretty, carrying a great load of wood on her back down the side of the mountain, and I stopped and engaged her. She was a Modenese, too. Indeed, I never saw such a nest of beauty as I have fallen into just the other side of the confine. The only trouble is that they all look very much alike.

I find that I enjoy Abetone much more this year than last, partly, I suppose, because I am used to it and partly because—I do not know why—I enjoy everything more this year than I ever did before. And then everybody was so glad to see us this year. Papa and I have a walk every morning. In the afternoon, Mamma goes with us, and we sit under the fir trees beside one of the little streams and she reads to us. This is the pleasantest part of the day. I am now expecting every day a line from you to tell me of your arrival. I only hope you'll manage to stay

till Christmas. Of course I will take you to see the conscript's wife and baby, and then we must go together and pay our respects to the Archbishop at San Francesco, and you shall see Cecchina; only you will never see her blue eyes. She had an illness in the spring, and when she recovered, her eyes had become black. Was it not strange!

Annina is to bring her baby to show you. He is a splendid great fellow, only six months old. He eats everything that the family eat,—bean-soup, black bread, fruit of all sorts, and macaroni. I told Annina that she would kill him if she gave him such things, to which she replied by asking me to look at him. . . .”

“Bellosguardo,
April 29, 1864.

Dear Lilly:

We were all much pleased to make the acquaintance of your friend Mrs. Grinnell. She is a very lovely woman and of singular beauty. She bought the picture of Clementina and paid me a good deal more for it than I asked. Lilly Fay has just taken another and Eleanor Shattuck has given me an order for a Unid. So you see my hands are more than full. I am engaged just now on a picture of Petrarch's Laura, having made the acquaintance of a young seamstress whose resemblance to the various portraits of Laura is something extraordinary.

You can hardly imagine the amount of pleasure which one finds in such a work. First, the study of Petrarch for a day or two, to decide on my subject; then the composing of the picture in my head, which was very entertaining, though it rather interfered with my night's sleep. Then the next thing, of course, was to go to Santa Maria Novella, down into the green cloister with its old frescoes, its green grass, its sunshine, and its perfect quiet, and the square patch of sky always looking so intensely blue above it; and from thence into the damp, solitary Spanish chapel, where I spent a happy half-hour in the tranquil society of Laura herself, with her fair innocent face looking full into mine, while I studied the dressing of her golden hair and the fashion of that green dress embroidered with violets, which, Petrarch says, he could never see a bank in the spring without thinking of.

I chose for my subject that beautiful scene where Laura sat under an apple tree with the blossoms falling all about her. How often I wished you could be with me when I sat under that tree in Gabriello Boni's field, the air all sweet with the blossoms and the face of my Laura looking as delicate as one of the flowers, as she leaned it against the rough old stem, and in that position went off quietly to sleep.

But one thing is certain: if I write any more about Laura my eyes will be in no condition to paint her tomorrow. Do send me word what day

you will be here, that I may lose no time in seeing you.

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny Alexander.”

“Bellosguardo,
January 3rd, 1866.

Dear Lilly :

I certainly cannot write my first letter of the year to any one but yourself. You say I did not tell you anything in my last letter about Beatrice. My poor Beatrice has met with a great affliction, in the loss of her husband. They had lived together for forty years. When I first met her this year, she was quite overcome. She had quite given up singing, and when I tried to induce her to sing again, she said, ‘I used to sing what my heart told me, but now my heart tells me to be still.’

Her heart told her, however, to sing again before we came away.

Since writing this, I have seen Mrs. Shaw, who brought me fifty francs from you, and her daughter gave me 200 francs for the poor, which I imagine I owe to you also, who have, no doubt, spoken a kind word for me. We have made great friends, and talk about you all the time.

You ask me to tell you something about the Dante celebration here last spring, but I should have to devote a letter entirely to that to give you any idea of it. And to tell the truth, I did

not see much of it. The city was certainly more beautiful than I ever saw it, and the streets were hung with garlands and banners, the old red lily rather taking the lead and the white cross not very conspicuous. The court and loggia of the Uffizi were fitted up for a ballroom, with mirrors, flowers, evergreens, and tapestries, and a fountain of wine in the center. The city for three days resolved itself into *sesti*, as in Dante's time, and each *sesti* hung out its appropriate banner.

You know how Dante's remains were discovered just about that time, and how we all had just a little hope that Ravenna might be generous and give him back to us. But that was too much to expect, and after all, I think Ravenna was right. With the bones were discovered a few bay-leaves which had once formed part of a garland, and it was suggested that one should be given to every Italian city, but that also was refused.

I knew one of the commissioners who was sent on from Florence to verify the remains and heard from him a most interesting account of all that took place. At my request he brought me a flower, which had been touched to the bones, which I keep as a most precious relic. I daresay that you know who this gentleman was—Padre Giuliani, the commentator of Dante. This Padre Giuliani has never been a great favourite of mine, but for the time being, I had quite a sympathy for him as he told me about his visit to

the remains. He was permitted, at his request, and as a particular favour, to kiss the forehead of the great Florentine. That, he said in a solemn and tremulous voice, was the great moment of his life, a moment never to be forgotten. I never before or afterwards saw Padre Giuliani thrown off his balance, but that visit to Ravenna was too much for him.

As for the statue, which was inaugurated in Piazza Santa Croce, I have always thought it a disgrace to Florence. I hardly suppose that Dante was a very handsome man, but if he were such a savage as they have made him, the Florentines had some reason in keeping him out of the city. His only expression is one of intense disgust, which, however, is partly accounted for by the near neighborhood of the new front of Santa Croce.

The procession was very grand. Every city and town in Italy was represented with its appropriate banner. But I think I had better not write any more about the festa or I shall never leave room to tell you about Christmas. . . .”

From our aunt to her father, Colonel Samuel Swett:

“Villa Bricchieri, Bellosguardo,
October 5, 1866.

My dear Father:

I was in hopes to have my house in full order before I wrote again, but we are still in a

very unsettled state. Last week was one of unusual interest to us, for Garibaldi has been here in a villa almost close by us. Last Monday morning, we were told he was coming almost immediately. Every house had hung out the Italian flag, and people were standing all along the road. In a few minutes we heard a great shouting, and quite a little army, mostly of Garibaldini, came along in a state of indescribable enthusiasm, some of them carrying well-worn flags and looking tired and heated, for the sun was intense, and they were hurrying. In a few minutes a carriage appeared with an immense Italian flag with the Lion of St. Mark in the centre, and in this was seated Garibaldi. He looked in fair health and fine spirits, and much handsomer than any likeness of him; more elegant-looking than any crowned head I have yet seen; a most kindly, thoughtful face with a gracious dignity of manner that was very attractive, and that is one cause of his wonderful influence.

It seems that on his arrival at the railroad station the National Guard did not present arms, which gave great offense, and they were hissed by the people, who immediately took the horses from the carriage, with the intention of drawing it themselves. But he forbade it. When he passed the villa, the road up and down was just one mass of human beings and the shouts of '*Viva Garibaldi!*' were incessant. And every one was watching him intently. I never saw so much

feeling shown for any one. He looked gratified, certainly, but quite self-possessed and tranquil. He wore a red cap embroidered in gold and a striped black and white thin cloak made burnous fashion with the '*camicia rossa*' all of the finest materials and very fresh and nice.

There was a long row of carriages filled with officers and ladies, among them Garibaldi's beautiful daughter with a lovely child about two years old, dressed, like the rest, in the red shirt. As he came along, Mr. Alexander waved Mr. Brewer's great American flag from the first window, and he kissed his hand to it. Fanny and I were at the next one. I waved my handkerchief and said, '*Viva Garibaldi!*' with the rest, and he bowed and smiled, and waved his hand to us. His face reminded me of the expression of a noble Newfoundland dog who looks up in one's face to make friends. Just so sagacious and just so benevolent and friendly. He stayed up here two days, and there was a constant stream of people coming and going.

There was a crowd all about the villa, and some of them seemed planted there. I saw four tall ladies standing about an equal distance apart, immovable, watching the house and looking just like a row of trees. In the evening there was another crowd of Garibaldini with torches and a great band of music. As you may imagine, the shouting was tremendous. When they burst out with '*Garibaldi's Hymn*' he made a speech to

the crowd. We were anxious to give some refreshment to his tired-looking followers, but we had no time to provide anything, and, on counting all the flasks of wine we could muster, found it was impossible. So I had to satisfy myself by handing down a glass of wine or a bunch of grapes to those who looked ill or had been wounded. I took the opportunity of giving away quite a pile of the dear Lawrence's books. The Sermon on the Mount and hymn-books were the favorites, and seemed even more acceptable than the fruit or wine.

Fanny had warned me not to give indiscriminately, as those of high rank had gone volunteers and wore their dress. Their manners were most courteous. They would share the glass of wine with their companions till they had scarcely any themselves, and go away as softly as possible when I told them there was a child ill in the house. A finer-looking or better behaved body of soldiers there could not be. Two of Fanny's friends wished to see the General. One of them was Giannina Milli,¹ who had written some poetry about his wife, and of whose writings he is said to be an admirer, and to have read them when he was confined with his wound. And as I had told her I should like to be presented, she went down to Florence and put matters in train. She went with one of the ladies and sent into Garibaldi a list of those who wished

¹ Giannina Milli, noted Italian poetess and improvisatrice.

to see him. Giannina's name headed the list. Mine was the last. I was described, much to Fan's annoyance, as an American lady of distinction, after which the officer who befriended them, and who appeared impressed by this description, occupied himself by trying to obtain sight of her, which she prevented by keeping behind her friend, with the idea that in her india rubbers and her splashed condition she would not reflect honor on so distinguished a family.

I had forgotten all about the matter when she came in, breathless, for she ran up the hill in advance of the carriage, and told me eleven ladies were waiting for me in Florence; that I was one of a deputation, and that the General had begged us to come as soon as possible. Mr. A. was fortunately at home, to accompany me to the door of the palace and receive me when I came out. I just thought of my book of American photographs and caught it up as I went to the carriage. I could not help wishing I knew what I was a deputation of or from. It might be of condolence on the peace, which he is supposed to disapprove; or his wound, which is unhealed; or of congratulation on the liberation of Venice. And a suitable demeanor was desirable.

In the meantime, I took from my book the photographs of Lincoln and his little son sent us by Mr. Pratt, one of Sherman on horseback, very fine, a present from Aunt Sarah, and one of Grant, that Mr. Wales gave me. It quite went to

my heart to part with them but I knew I could replace them, first or last, and such a good friend of America deserved them. I am afraid I delayed the others, for we were late, and another party had taken our places. So we had to wait a while and I went into the store of our baker, near by, who not only gave me the only chair but with much politeness spread a sheet of brown paper in it, by way of a cushion. I took this opportunity to inquire of Giannina the nature of our deputation, but found she was as ignorant as myself. The place was crowded with people coming and going; carriages were standing about the door, and the low wall opposite was occupied by a close line of men and women, many of whom had brought their knitting or straw braid with them, and all were watching the windows intently. I found my companions were distinguished *really* mostly for talent or rank, but it was rather a triumph for my republican feelings when I inquired the name of one uncommonly interesting woman to find she was a schoolmistress, and the very sweetest of women.

The palace was full of people in and out of uniform. There were three rooms open and we waited in the middle one, and the chair assigned to me was before Garibaldi's writing table, which was covered with papers. You may imagine how much I would have liked to steal one.

In a few minutes, his visitors passed out from

the next room and he came with them and remained standing near the door while the ladies gathered around him. Here his surprising memory did him and them both good service, for he was able to say something appropriate to each one. He told Giannina her name was known not only to him and throughout Europe, but all over the world.

As I knew every word and movement was precious to these Italian ladies and that I was admitted by courtesy, I decided not to come forward and be presented, but to remain on the outskirts of the deputation, only too glad of the opportunity to watch his looks and words, which I had a fine chance of doing. He was taller than I expected—about a head taller than any of the ladies, one of whom was considerably above common height,—vigorous-looking but not stout. His hair was brown, partly gray, abundant and waving, cut across just at the neck; his eyes dark-brown, clear, pleasant, and steady; his features regular and face oval, with a handsome beard. The general effect was that of a naturally happy face somewhat worn by the cares and labors of his eventful career. He stood leaning his left hand, covered by his cloak, on his cane, his wound not being healed. I was most impressed by his voice and manner of speaking. His tone was most '*simpatico*' and full of feeling, not loud, but clear, distinct, and deliberate; and he speaks in the most dignified and gentle manner

possible. There are few crowned heads so naturally courtly.

After a while Giannina insisted on my coming forward and being presented. I was introduced as an American. He shook hands with me very kindly and said he remembered seeing me at the window of the villa. He spoke of public affairs and said, 'I never despair of my country.'

They all became very much interested, and many of the ladies were in tears. After a while, Giannina asked me to give him the photographs and so I came forward again. Lincoln I sent to his little grandson, who bears his name. The others I gave to him.' He examined them and seemed much pleased and shook hands again and spoke delightfully of his feeling for the American cause, which he said he regarded as the cause of liberty. We did not stay long, and as they took leave, one by one, I waited till the last and took the opportunity to thank him for his goodness to my country and also to myself. He gave me his hand again and said that *he* was very grateful. Like all who approach him, I felt the charm of his presence, for as I turned away I felt very sorry to think I should probably never in this world see that noble and kindly face again. I looked back as I passed through the door; he was looking after us with the same gracious and kindly expression.

It is understood that some members of the Government are very jealous of the great honors

paid him, and he has, as far as possible, avoided all display, declining even to go to the theatre. It is said he considers the work of his life done and that he is taking leave of his friends, intending to remain in retirement at Caprera. I had no idea of making such a long story, so I will only add love to you and you all.

Yours affectionately,
Lucia."

Our aunt to our mother:

"Abetone,
July 12, 1867.

My dear Mary:

I am much obliged to you for your letter, which I was very glad to receive. I tried to answer it before I came away, but could not.

I have promised to make a visit in September to a lady who has titles enough to figure in a sensation novel. Her husband is an Armenian prince and an Italian baron, and she is a countess in her own right. They are enormously rich, and keep reminding me of the stories of the ogre and of the Arabian Nights. For there were seven little princesses, each with a fortune of her own, and three hundred thousand dollars' worth of jewels. The father of the present prince was a great favorite of the Shah of Persia; his widow lives with her son, old and blind, with great presses full of treasure that she keeps locked up. Our friend showed me a pair of earrings she gave her that cost eight thousand dol-

lars, and one black diamond worth much more, and a ruby named '*diavoletto*' that appears to throw out streams of fire in the sunshine.

They came to Florence this spring and are great friends of Fan's other self, the Countess Baroni, who had praised her up so that they each and all fell in love with her. And the old lady wanted to give her a pair of diamond earrings, but Fan told her that she had never worn any, and so she had one want the less.

They found we were going to Venice in May, and asked us to come, instead, and spend July with them in the Palace Contarini, which belongs to them, as then the place would be full of company for the baths. But I was afraid of the heat, and they then said they should leave their villa at Padua, where they were staying, and go to Venice to receive us. But I said I would go in September instead, and it will all be so new and strange to me. I expect to enjoy it extremely. . . ."

CHAPTER IV

THE VISIT TO AMERICA AND THE RETURN TO ITALY

ON the 11th of June, 1868, the Alexanders sailed from Liverpool for their long-deferred visit to America. The following letter to our mother was written by our aunt a short time before they left England:

“London,
May 26, 1868.

Dear Mary:

As our passage to America is engaged, and actually paid for, I can at last venture to say that, D. V., we shall have the pleasure of seeing you all in something less than another month. I had not dared before to say anything about coming because I felt that it was so uncertain. We shall not be able to sail from Liverpool before the 9th of June, as we found we had been deceived when we were told that there was a steamer went to Boston direct, on the 2nd. However, it gives us a little more time here, which is perhaps just as well; and there is so much to be seen, that, work as hard as we can, from morning till night, we shall leave a great deal undone, when we go away, that we should have been very glad to have accomplished.

Mr. Alexander thought himself hardly equal

to the undertaking, but he finds it very easy and enjoys it more than any of us. We have been very fortunate in meeting kind friends who have advised and helped us. We came from Florence to Paris, across Mt. Cenis, without stopping. It was a hard pull but did us no lasting harm. At Paris we found a courier who had often been to our house with our friends. He took possession of us and saw us fairly started for London, where we arrived at midnight and found, waiting for us at the station, friends who took us to lodgings where we live just as if we were keeping house.

You may imagine I'm impatient to see Boston again, now the time is so near. Mr. Alexander and Fan join with me in sending much love to you all.

Yours affectionately,

Lucia."

Aunt Lucia loved Boston, the old Common, the beautiful suburbs of the city, where she had hoped to make her home. Above all she loved her Boston friends and was happy to be among them again. The Alexanders' first visit was to Exeter. Our father was delighted to have with him once more his beloved sister, from whom he had been separated for fifteen years.

The children of the family were much excited at the thought of meeting their unknown uncle, aunt, and cousin. Our father met them at the station, but although it was a long distance from our house, they refused to drive, and preferred to walk through the town. They looked foreign indeed, as our aunt and

Francesca wore no hats but black lace scarves over their heads, having very much the effect of Spanish mantillas. Both had a great charm for children, and soon we became fascinated with them and greatly enjoyed having them with us. We delighted in Aunt Lucia's entertaining stories, many of which we remember to this day. For Uncle Alexander we had a great admiration, and he was always most kind to us all, although our brother Will, "Willy," as he always called him, was his especial favorite. Of him he became very fond.

The Alexanders spent the rest of the summer in Swampscott and in the autumn took a suite of rooms in the Winthrop House in Boston. Our father and mother decided to close the house in Exeter and take a suite there also, in order to be near them.

That winter in Boston was, I think, the happiest winter of our aunt's life. It seemed as if the Alexanders' old friends felt that they could not do enough to show how glad they were to welcome them back to America. Invitations were showered upon them; there was a succession of dinner parties; their rooms were filled with beautiful flowers. Whenever Aunt Lucia could find a quiet evening, she spent it with us, talking over family affairs and old Exeter days. One of Aunt Lucia's first visitors, and one who was always most welcome, was Whittier, the poet. For her he had a most affectionate regard, and although they never met again after the following year, when she returned to Italy, they always corresponded with each other, and their friendship remained unchanged as long as Mr. Whittier lived. I remember one afternoon in Florence, several years later, Aunt Lucia's reading me one of his letters in answer to a letter of hers asking if he would write for her his favorite poem of all the poems he had ever written, and if he would send it with a lock of his hair. He wrote off "Eternal Goodness" and enclosed it in one of his letters, saying,

“I send the verses as thee requested; I also send the lock of hair, but thee must remember that thee is responsible for the folly.”

Although there was much that Francesca enjoyed during her visit to America, she had always a fear that she might not be able to return to her beloved Italy. Some of her happiest hours in Boston were spent working in her little studio, for the poor Italians of both Boston and Italy. She painted a number of portraits and drew many pictures in pen and ink. But at this time, before she became famous, she asked only ten dollars for an outline drawing, and twenty for a drawing with much shading. My aunt and cousin became much interested in the North End Mission, of which I think Professor Tourjee was in charge. We used to go with them on Sunday afternoons when they went to teach in the Sunday School, where there were many poor little Italians and Portuguese.

A very pleasant event of that winter was the marriage of our Cousin Wilmina Swett to General Edward Hallowell. Aunt Lucia was very fond of her niece Wilmina and was much interested in the wedding. To the children of our family, it was a very exciting event. We made up a party with the Alexanders, and all went out to Belmont. It was a very pretty and simple home wedding. The bride looked lovely and the bridegroom very handsome. General Edward Hallowell was a remarkably handsome man,—tall with very fair hair. All the guests signed their names in a book, according to the Quaker custom. Among the guests at the wedding, I can recall the very charming young sisters of General Hallowell, who came from Philadelphia.

In June, the Alexanders went to Newport. After a few weeks there, they went to Swampscott for the remainder of the summer, and sailed for Italy early in September. The first letter after their arrival in Paris was written to our father:

“Paris,
September 13th, 1869.

My dear Brother,

Since the day I last saw you, nothing very unexpected has happened to us, or that really seems worth writing. But I know you will like to be assured. We are all well and comfortable, and I am anxious to hear from you and how you are, as I did not feel quite satisfied about your state of health when we parted. I tried to console myself by thinking of Dr. Cabot's promise to cure you entirely. But do be sure, whenever you write, to mention exactly and minutely how you are. I was doubly sorry to come away just now, for I could at least have made you frequent visits. And besides, I miss you terribly. I should not care to live over again the day I left Boston. I remember just as we turned out of Bowdoin Square it came into my mind that it was *possible* to give it all up; forfeit the passage money and stay in America, and the same temptation haunted me so much as I went on board the steamer that it was quite a relief when the pilot left us and the chance was out of my reach.

If anybody but Fan had been concerned, I should not have hesitated a minute. I can give you no idea how unhappy I felt the morning I came away. Cousin Horace Gray stood waiting for us in the station in New York, and left us finally in our stateroom. He is one of the most excellent and delightful of men, and his kindness

and generosity are wonderful. I consider it one of the good fortunes of my life that I have such a good friend. His own spirits were so inspiring, and he found so much to interest us that he insisted on our seeing, that I was astonished to suffer so little.

Our staterooms were very large, really rather chambers than staterooms. But the portholes had to be closed almost all the way, and you may imagine how I gasped for air. It was a case of real distress. There were many pleasant people on board with whom Mr. A. made friends, and who sent us quite a variety of things to our staterooms, which Fan and I never left. Among them was an Italian, Mr. Valerio (who married a niece of Miss Sedgwick's) who has been Consul at Genoa, and knows many of our friends.

The first sign we had of approaching land was a little brown bird that was blown on board quite exhausted, six hundred miles from land. I was, of course, glad to come within sight of the lighthouse at Brest, but the land looked to me like my prison, perhaps for life. . . ."

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

"Florence,
October 9th, 1869.

Dear Lucy,

Your kind letter, which I received about a fortnight ago, gave me the greatest pleasure, and was the first letter I had received from

America since my departure. Papa and Mamma were much shocked to hear of the death of their old friend, Dr. Townsend. I just remember him. As a child I was fond of him because when he used to come to the house to see Papa, he always took much notice of me.

Now I must tell you a little about ourselves, who have been here now about seven weeks. Our journey was very pleasant, and at Paris I found letters awaiting me from all my Italian friends, full of the most extravagant joy at our return. We stayed there about four weeks and were all very well and happy, but the best of all was the journey from Paris here. The first night we slept in the cars, at least Papa and Mamma did. I was too much excited to sleep much, and when the early morning light first showed me the country, I was in sight of the mountains, the dear mountains that I had not seen for so long. It was with a strange feeling of relief and refreshment that I watched their beautiful faint outline low on the horizon against the slowly brightening sky.

That day we crossed the Moncenisio, and the evening found us in my beloved Italy. We passed the night at Torino, which appeared to me of the most exceeding beauty, with many grand old palaces and churches, and down almost every street a wonderful prospect ending in the mountains. The next day was all happiness. I seemed to forget that I had ever been out of

Italy. Everything along the road looked so familiar and homelike. It was after dark when we entered Florence, and before we had fairly stopped at the station, I saw the faces of some of my friends looking out for us, and in two or three minutes they were all about us, and I was embraced, as it seemed to me, by all at once, and my hands were filled with flowers without my being able to tell who had placed them there.

Nobody had changed much. I saw that at the first sight, and some aged people had walked a long distance, and some little children had been kept late from their beds, that no beloved face might be wanting at my first arrival. Then they all walked with us to the *locanda*, where our kind friend Giannina had engaged some quite beautiful rooms for us; and there they left us for the night.

And so, dear Lucy, I came back to my old home. After that we had some trouble. For a week or two Mamma was not well, and though she would never admit that anything was really the matter with her, I had no peace until I saw her quite restored. But it is all past now, and we are all very happy.

We have a beautiful apartment on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, close to the old church, and can see into the country from our window; can even see Bellosguardo, where we used to live, and the old villa, where we passed so many, to me at least, happy, happy years! I think there

is little doubt that we shall return to America in the spring and settle there definitely. Many reasons seem to make it necessary. And I hope that next time I shall be a little more reasonable and not worry you any more with my low spirits and homesickness. With much love from us all, I am now as ever, dear Lucy,

Your very affectionate friend,

Fanny.”

Our aunt to her cousin, Mr. Samuel W. Swett:

“Florence,

October 11, 1869.

My dear Cousin,

We reached here about eight o'clock, and as we stepped from the cars found ourselves in a crowd of friends. We have magnificent rooms in an old palace built by Luca Pitti—one door shuts off our quarters; we have an ante-room where we dine, an immense drawing-room twenty-one feet high, a superb room—two large sleeping-rooms and two small ones for trunks—our windows are southern, and on one of the finest of the squares. The last of the family, Madalena Pitti, a little deformed old lady, lives in a small portion of the palace of her ancestors, and lets the rest for a hotel. The day after our arrival, we had company from before breakfast till late at night, and presents of rare and valuable things; splendid bouquets kept coming all day. The next morning my pulse was a medical

curiosity; I have hardly sat up since. I do not think that I am ill, only tired, and I realize that I have passed the gates of my prison perhaps never to escape from it entirely. The heat and glare are still extreme and I keep thinking of the watered streets and elm trees in Boston. . . .

Yours affectionately,
L. G. A."

In the preceding letter, when our aunt writes "I realize that I have passed the gates of my prison," her foreboding that she might never again return to America proved to be true, for this visit, from which she had just returned, was the only one my aunt in all her long life ever paid to her native country. The apartment which she describes, although a part of the Hotel Bonciani, had a private entrance facing on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella. The entrance to the hotel was on another street. All friends of the Alexanders who ever visited them in the old palace must remember Raffaello, who always came with his great key to open the iron gates. Good kind Raffaello! He always was so much pleased to see us. For many years he had been with the Alexanders, and during our uncle's last illness was his devoted nurse. It was here that Francesca first had Edwige, her faithful maid and companion for forty years.

In the great salon were many valuable paintings. At the time when the Alexanders first went to Italy, during the war with Austria, many of the Italian churches were very poor and sold some of their pictures. In this way the Alexanders bought some paintings which afterwards became very valuable. They had two Giotto's, and a Ghirlandajo. With the many paintings were little pictures and gifts which had only a sentimental value.

In the dining-room against the walls were great

teakwood cabinets filled with rare old china, much of which our aunt had inherited, some of it having been brought to America in her grandfather's ships, and there were many beautiful pieces which had been collected by Uncle Alexander. On top of the cabinets were great Lowestoft punch bowls. We had never known how many, but Mr. Frank Lee, who was director of the Essex Institute in Salem, told us, when he came to see us in Washington, shortly after he had been to see our aunt in Florence, that he had counted them and that there were forty of them.

Francesca's little studio was at the top of the house, also her terrace garden, where she delighted in caring for her flowers. Aunt Lucia and Francesca had lived in this apartment for twenty years when one day the proprietor of the Hotel Bonciani came to our aunt and asked, "Is the Signora satisfied?" Our aunt looked at him in surprise, and said, "Yes, certainly, but why do you ask me?" He answered, "When the Signora came here twenty years ago she said she would let me know if they were satisfied, and she has never told me."

Francesca to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

"Florence,
November 20, 1869.

Dearest Lilly:

When I look back on the day that I last saw you, how very far away it seems and how much has happened since. Before we came, we wrote to our friend Giannina Milli, the improvisatrice, and she took a very pleasant apartment for us in a very old palace turned into a hotel, in Piazza Santa Maria Novella, close to the church. We could hardly be more pleasantly

situated. From our windows we can see across the Piazza and the buildings beyond to Bellosguardo, where we used to live, and see our old house, and most of the other houses about it, which are associated with my old happy life. Which all seems very natural and homelike. With regard to my friends in Florence, I find few changes, excepting that they all make much more of us than ever. They have all resolved that we are never to go away again. Marina, my dear Venetian friend, the Countess Baroni, who has, since the departure of the Austrians, come into a large fortune, has offered us a wing of the family palace at Bassano, containing twenty-three rooms, and our choice of whether to form part of her family or to keep up a separate establishment for the whole of our lives. Another friend has placed at our disposition an apartment in her palace in Florence. Angelina says she has no anxiety at all about our movements, for she has prayed so much for us to stay that she *knows* we shall find it impossible ever to go. And Marianna contents herself with forbidding us and every one else ever to mention the subject before her. I am delighted with your Uncle Charles' idea of a museum in Boston, where something of the sort is very much needed. And the Americans are so liberal, that if such an institution were once started, I am certain it would receive no end of contributions, especially if he were at the head of it, as I hope he may be. For



HALL OF PALAZZO REZZONICO AT BASSANO IN THE VENETO
*De Quarenghi, architect of the imperial palace of St. Petersburg, was the
architect of Palazzo Rezzonico*

no one else, it seems to me, could be so suitable. . . .”

Our aunt to her cousin, Mr. Samuel W. Swett:

“Florence,
December 22, 1869.

My dear Cousin:

I have to record always the same soft, dark, rainy weather, and in consequence the river rose in the hills and came down here in a torrent. It is a grand sight. It goes tearing along in great waves, and it seems exactly like some wild creature taking great leaps. Last week was the *festa* of Santa Lucia, and it is the fashion here to keep the day of the saint whose name one bears. In the morning, immense bouquets were sent in, and one smaller one of very choice flowers from a poor girl who gives lessons. I thought this present was about the best of all.

Then an old gentleman, more than seventy years old, sent me a sonnet by himself and a very little old china cup bearing the stamp of the date of the manufacture before America was discovered. Then came an autographed letter of Rossini's, one of the Emperor Leopold, dated 1667, and a set of curious old engravings. In the evening, all our intimate friends assembled, all having put on their best dresses, and there was a splendid piece of music prepared for the occasion. Marina Baroni came in last, bringing a

lovely drawing of Santa Lucia by the first Florentine artist, with a sonnet by the first professor, and an exquisite frame of ivy leaves by the best wood-carver in Florence. I think she was considered to have outdone herself.

It was all very Italian and very pretty, and I was thinking all the evening how I could make up my mind to part, once and for all, with such friends. They said they wished to show me I was not alone, even here.

Yours affectionately,
L. G. A.”

“Florence,
January 11, 1870.

My dear Cousin:

Both of the pieces by Whittier were charming. Fan liked *The Indian Deacon* best, but I fancied the description of his little school-day love. He was really attached to a very beautiful woman of Dover when he was young, but his father died poor. The care of the family came on him. He could not propose at that time. She married a Southerner. She is now a widow with ten children, and they are very good friends.

Bessie Winthrop and her husband are here. She looks well and happy, and our friends are all disposed to be charmed with her. She has lived so long in Paris that she is more European than American. Perhaps her health might not

be so good at home. Fan has just drawn a beautiful picture representing one of the legends of Saint Catherine of Sienna. She used to spend so much time in praying as to interfere with the housework and irritate her father, who, coming in one day, while she was on her knees, saw a white dove hovering in a glory over her head. So he never found any more fault. It is considered the most beautiful thing she has done. She is wonderfully well and seems to have returned to the robust health of her early childhood.

Mr. Alexander keeps pretty well in spite of the foggy weather. He is longing for a home, but does not care to live in Boston. His tastes are all for flowers and animals and a rather large house. I only hope there is one waiting for us somewhere.”

“Florence,
February 2nd, 1870.

My dear Cousin:

Bessie Winthrop and her husband have gone to Rome. She made herself very agreeable to the Florentines and they were delighted with her. I had a little party for her, which was quite an event to me. I invited about fifty, all Italians, and almost every one came. Our grand room looked very pretty, lighted with wax candles. My entertainment was simple but abundant. It was only lemonade and sweet wine on a side table and ice-cream and cake on a round

one, and all helped themselves and each other; and you may be sure they liked it, for my very abundant supply was just enough, which was very gratifying.

The ladies here dress rather simply, but some of the jewelry was wonderful. It was bought in old times, when it was almost the only safe and portable investment before banks were known, and has been entailed and handed down. It makes modern adornment quite of no account, as such cannot be purchased. I was much gratified to see how the grandest people present laid themselves out to entertain those who were poor or who might not feel quite at home. I invited them at seven, and by eight they all came.

Bessie speaks both French and Italian, and she really appeared lovely, quite an honor to Boston. When they went away at half-past eleven, she said she wished it were all to begin over again. I hardly think she or any one else ever saw anything just like it, for there was a wonderful amount of talent employed for her entertainment. First a dear friend sang two songs, equal to Alboni. Then a pretty little girl played astonishingly well. Then Giannina Milli recited two of her own poems in a manner to which no description of mine can do any justice. And then a sister of Prince Corsini's sang, which she never does in company, so that this was evidently considered a great compliment.

The great event of the evening, however, was

a poem addressed to Fan. About twenty sheets of printed paper were distributed, one of them to me. It was a description of her, highly complimentary, no name, however, being given. Giannina Milli was requested to read it and asked my permission to do so. I hardly knew what to say. It seemed making her very conspicuous. But the poet was not very young and would be much disappointed, and my maternal vanity was gratified. So I told her I could trust entirely to her discretion. You might have heard a pin fall while she was reading; and then there was great applause. Fan took it all with her usual self-command. She is used to being made much of here. Then she sang a song, the burden of which was, '*Non ti scordar di me*' which was found very affecting, in view of our possible departure. You may suppose all this makes me feel more at home here than I once thought possible. . . ."

"Florence,
March 2nd, 1870.

My dear Cousin:

Fan came home yesterday morning with her hands full of flowers, and asked me to guess who had sent me a present. It turned out to be no less than the Princess Margherita. Count Negri has just been to Naples with the King, in his capacity of aide-de-camp, and, thinking it would please me, he told her we had been of some

service to his regiment in the war, and asked her to send me her autograph and photograph. So she sent me a charming one, full length, album size, and wrote under it the date, and ‘Margherita di Savoia.’ It came in a large envelope with the royal arms, looking very grand indeed. This is the season rents are paid three months in advance, and now I see how poorly labor is paid here. Every one whom I employ and most of those I know come to me in distress. They are living on insufficient food and will be turned out of doors, without some help. I know them to be industrious and extremely saving, and yet it seems almost cruel kindness to pay them in advance. If you were here I wonder whether you would not change your advice and tell me to give more. . . .”

“Florence,
April 27th, 1870.

My dear Cousin :

Enrichetta Nerli comes every other day after dinner and takes us into the country. And when we are up on the hills we walk sometimes for miles. I only wish you could see how lovely the country is. The wheat is well along, fresh and green, and the apple and peach trees are in blossom. A little snow remains on the mountain tops, and the river and the city in the valley just at sundown make a picture more beautiful than ever was painted. I cannot tell you how kind this friend continues. She really seems to have

transferred to us something of the affection she gave to her parents, and you can imagine how grateful we feel for this, when we are so far from all those we belong to. If you ever see her, you will be directly in love with her, just as we all are.

I always think of a Sunday afternoon in Boston as the most charming of recollections—the splendid trees in the streets, the sound of the familiar tunes in the churches, and most of all the entire absence of poverty; the poorest black, as well as white, elegantly dressed, such scenes are better than all the galleries and cathedrals. Here the laboring people look so sickly, even those who would not be called in want, that it takes away from the charm that is natural to the place. I often think of the streets in Boston with the splendid elm trees and the streets watered night and morning. The country here is beautiful but it is old. There are no masses of verdure and almost no birds. I should be glad to see one of the robins which are so plenty around your home. I brought a robin's egg with me that Charlotte's boys brought me and it is considered a great and a beautiful curiosity. Once every week Fan goes into the country and spends the day with the Marchesa Ridolfi. They send in for her. Last evening Enrichetta took us all there and it seemed just like my old idea of Italy.

There is a lovely garden on a terrace on which

the drawing-room windows open. It is an immense room, the ceiling making a high arch. We all walked in the garden and they gave us a great basket of tea-roses and other flowers, and after sundown we sat down at a table under a great paulonia in blossom, with some simple refreshments.

The Convent of the Certosa was near by, and the old bells were as sweet as possible. There was a villa or a church on every hill, and they grew higher and higher till they ended in the lovely outline of the mountains in the horizon. The ladies were as stately as old pictures, and the three little boys were playing about with a tame ring-dove. It seemed more like a novel than reality."

From our aunt to our mother:

"Florence,
November 2nd, 1870.

Dear Mary:

Your letter was received only yesterday. Fan will be very glad to have May's promised letter. I have been trying to write to you for a long time, but when I went up to San Marcello I had a list of fifty letters that had to be written, and the air was so sultry and heavy I was good for nothing. I worked through most of them, and we came back the first of September expecting to go immediately to spend a month with

Marina Baroni at Bassano. But just as we were deciding which train to take, her uncle, Count Negri, came in to claim a promise we had made, that in case of need we would go to work for his regiment, which was to go to Rome. Of course our way was clear.

At first the work came rather hard, but we soon fell into the old track and enjoyed it. Our friends were most helpful. We used to have a large table, and every evening it was surrounded by workers, who took home a great stock to finish. One of them used to sit up until two in the morning to work. After the box went, we went to Marina's, though we could stay only a fortnight. We were astonished by the magnificence of her residence, which is like a royal palace, and surrounded by lovely grounds. We had four immense rooms, connected by a gallery that crossed a great hall. We enjoyed every minute. We made some long excursions, for there were many wonders of nature and art within twenty miles, and then dined late and had company in the evening.

A good many Venetians have villas and live about there in the summer, and Marina is the great lady of the neighborhood. She made us entirely at home, so it was delightful. There had never been any Americans in the place before, and so you may be sure I did my best for the credit of my country, for if we had been Japanese we could hardly have excited more curiosity.

We had a variety of presents, some of them very interesting, from people we hardly knew.

From there we went to Padova to stay with our Armenian friends, whose likenesses, I dare say, you remember, and they took us to see wonderful treasures of art. One day, they had the Armenian archbishop from Constantinople. I sat next him at dinner, and he has invited us to come and see him at Rome, where he now lives.

Our host was educated at an English college at Madras, and one morning astonished us at the breakfast table by reciting Dr. Watts' 'How glorious is our Heavenly King!' all through. I remember so well your husband's saying it Sunday afternoons at Cambridge at a very early age indeed. They live in the extreme of luxury.

Marina had offered us part of her palace for life, and Baron Aganoor told Mr. A. that he is now fitting up a part of his, and he would have it finished according to our taste and give it to us for life, if we would live there. I told his wife it was not possible.

He took us to see the jewels he had given to the relics of Saint Antonio. They were wonders, all rare. They cost forty thousand dollars. He used to give ten thousand dollars to the Pope as Peter's pence, but he does not now. He is very religious and spends almost all of his time studying the Bible in various languages. He and Mr. A. talked all the time on this subject, and were inseparable. She and the girls went

with us to Venice, and arranged everything for us there. I hope for good news from you soon.

Yours affectionately,
Lucia."

Our aunt to her cousin, Mrs. Samuel W. Swett:

"Florence, January 15th, 1871.

My dear cousin Mary:

One of the principal events of the present moment is the presence of General Sheridan here, 'The conqueror of Cedar *Chreeck*,' as the papers call him. The King has given him a reception and also a dinner to which eighty military celebrities have been invited. The King had an animated conversation with him about hunting in America, and was so much charmed with his account of it as to express much regret that America was so far off that he could not go there to enjoy it. Dinners and balls were given for the General every day, and he is considered very attractive and genial in his manners. He has, of course, had opportunities of seeing both the French and Prussians fight, and he says that neither of them are to be compared to the Americans, whose charges are made with an impetuosity quite unequalled. There is an English lady here who has two nephews in the Prussian army before Paris. They write her they are sleeping in canvas tents, the thermometer being below zero.

Mr. A. is remarkably well, and so is Fan. She

is strong and active, and out in all weathers, rain and shine. She is the means of saving many lives and of making many more comfortable. I want to go up to Bellosguardo to see the Stephen Perkinses and the Nortons, who are living there, so I will only add our united love to yourself and Cousin Ann.

Yours affectionately,
L. G. A.”

Francesca to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Florence, June 6th, 1871.

Dearest Lilly:

I received your affectionate and interesting letter last August in the mountains of San Marcello, where we passed the summer, and I meant to have written to you long ago. I work now a great deal in pen and ink, which is rather trying for the eyes, and I can therefore write but little.

San Marcello is a little lower than Abetone, on the same road, and is a very ancient, miniature walled town. It stands on a slope of a grand chestnut-covered mountain, with a ravine far below it full of broken rocks, among which the little torrent Limestone, cold and clear, rushes and tumbles with a great deal of noise and very little water. On the other side rises another mountain ridge, steep and upright, like a wall, with the chestnut trees clinging to it, one above another, to its very summit.

I think I was never in a more beautiful place, and I have a very pleasant recollection of the inhabitants, who were poor and ignorant people but for the most part pious and honest, of great beauty, and with a talent for music and poetry which made them very interesting.

Crime was pretty much unknown in the neighborhood, and such was the primitive state of society that I used to go freely into every home in the place without the least danger of annoyance from any one, tending babies, prescribing for invalids, and gossiping with old women, as if I had lived there all my life.

And now, dear Lilly, I must tell you a very strange experience in my life. I have been honoured at San Marcello as a Catholic saint. I can tell you the fact without vanity, as it did not arrive from any virtue which these good people saw in me, but from a curious combination of circumstances. An elderly woman in the place had been ill for some months, and her illness had been mismanaged. Mamma advised me to try a simple remedy for her, which, assisted by the imagination, of which she had more than the usual share, effected a cure in so short a time that I myself was astonished at it. But then, to be sure, I had advised her to desist from green plums and some other delicacies of the same description in which she had been in the habit of indulging rather too freely. And no doubt this had a good deal to do with her recovery. But

my patient immediately jumped to the hasty conclusion that I had wrought a miracle, which of course was only to be accounted for on the ground of my being a saint. It was in vain that I disclaimed the honor and tried to explain. She knew what a miracle was! The saints in the *leggendario* cured sick people by the touch of their hands, and I had touched a little flour and it had cured her. It was all the same thing! Of course she was not such a fool as to suppose that the virtue was in the flour. No, it was in those hands. *Manine Preziose!* And with that she caught up one of them and kissed it, and pressed it to her bosom, and went off into a flood of tears. And I stood there with a humiliating sense of being an impostor.

All this would have been rather amusing if it had ended there. But Giudetta, in the warmth of her feelings, published the miracle far and near, and after that my experience became rather painful. It was not pleasant to have a poor cripple come toiling three or four miles down a rough mountain path on her crutches and present herself at the door entirely exhausted but with her face lighted up with a confident hope in my powers. And it was not pleasant, either, to have a charcoal-burner, to whom I had just declared my inability to cure his wife of an incurable complaint, offer me money, with an idea that I was 'holding off' for a large price.

We came back to Florence early in the autumn, intending to go immediately and pass a week or two with Marina Baroni, my Venetian friend, in whom you have always taken an interest, at her beautiful palace near Bassano. But just about that time the Italian army were preparing to march upon Rome, and as people expected a good deal more of a battle than really afterwards took place, Mamma thought it best to stay here a while and do a little work for the army. Every evening a dozen friends met together around our table to prepare lint and bandages, and every day Mamma gave out work to four or five poor women.

One evening, as we sat hard at work, singing little songs in chorus to make the work go faster, a friend of ours came hurrying in all out of breath, saying that the last train for Rome would depart in an hour, and that it would be the last opportunity to send our things, as after that the Government would use all the cars for troops. You may imagine the hurry. Fortunately there was a box in the house, and into that everything was crowded—finished and unfinished, the children, of course, being particularly anxious about their little heaps of lint, to which they added two or three threads at the last minute. Then the gentlemen present set off with their load to the station and were just in time.

A few days after this, as I sat at my work in my little painting-room, I heard some one calling

in the street, 'The Italians are in Rome!' And then, one after another, the bells of the various churches began to ring, and as I went to the window, I saw a number of men and boys, like a swarm of black flies, covering the top of Giotto's campanile, where they were raising the Italian flag, and I knew that Italy was all one at last!

Soon after this we went to Marina's palace, and about this visit I should like to tell you a great deal if I could, for it was one of the most interesting experiences of my life. Bassano is about twenty-five miles from Padova, at the foot of the Alps, in the midst of a luxuriant country, and is a perfect and uninjured specimen of an Italian city of the trecento, the loggiate bordering nearly all the streets. The various and beautiful towers, the city wall draped richly in ivy and Virginia creeper (this last was of a deep crimson when I was there in the month of October, and climbed to the top of the highest towers), the rich carvings of balconies and windows, and the grace and endless variety of architecture, all made me feel as if we had left the nineteenth century very far behind, and I, at least, felt in no hurry to renew my acquaintance with it.

The city was clean, like most Venetian cities, and very quiet. The river Brenta ran through it, broad and majestic, of pure transparent water. Almost all the homes had gardens, and the flowers seemed to grow larger and deeper-

coloured than in other places, owing to the rich soil and pure air. Where the gardens were wanting, the curious little Venetian balconies were filled with flowering plants.

I was hardly prepared to find my Marina living in a palace like a royal residence, but so it was; an immense building where one of the Popes lived in olden times, with defences like a fortification, with four square towers, with a hall in the centre, like a church, with gateways and windows and staircases of white marble. I must say she looked very much at home in it! We had a suite of four rooms and a balcony. My room, which was pretty much like the others, was so large that I felt at night almost as if I were sleeping out-of-doors. It had three windows of immense size, and massive shutters closed by wooden bars which I found myself quite unable to lift. The floor was of mosaic, and the Pope's arms were wrought into the architectural ornaments everywhere. Everything about the place was old; even the fine, ruffled linen on the beds went back to the days of the Venetian Republic.

The life here was as strange as the place. We had visitors from morning till night, for two reasons: one, that we were Marina's company, and she was the great lady of the place; the other that no Americans had ever been in the place before, and we were therefore objects of extreme curiosity. The Bassano girls, Silvia's friends, were pretty and gentle, with that peculiar soft-

ness usual to girls educated on the old-fashioned Italian plan. Not one of them had ever walked out by herself, nor conversed with an unmarried man alone. Many hours have I passed walking up and down the great hall with one or another on my arm. And they were pleasant hours, too. Some lasting friendships were formed between us, and when I left the place, it was with a feeling of regret that almost astonished myself.

After this we went to Padova, where we were invited to stay in the house of an Armenian prince, with whose family we had been acquainted some years before in Florence. After Padova, we came back to dear Florence, and here we have been ever since. Do you know Miss Mary Bryant of Beacon Street? I have just sent her a picture of mine which I should like to have you see. Another is to be exhibited at Child's on Tremont Street. Good-bye now, dear Lilly.

From your affectionate friend,
Fanny."

My aunt to her cousin, Mrs. Samuel W. Swett:

"Florence, November 7, 1871.

Dear Cousin Mary:

Fanny is working hard, as usual. There is quite a competition among the Americans for her pictures. She had one pen-and-ink drawing, the largest she ever made. Charles Appleton saw it and asked Miss Shaw to ascertain if it

could be had. But Miss Shaw ended by persuading him to yield it to her. It cost sixty dollars, which is the most Fan has asked for a pen-and-ink drawing.

It is the story of a nun, and Enrichetta sat for the nun. I hope you will see it, and then you will see how beautiful and lovely she is. She is said to have watched with another nun who is ill, and, having gone into the kitchen in the morning to make her some broth, she fell asleep from fatigue, and the *Jesu Bambino* came and watched the broth to prevent its burning. The picture represents the kitchen with all its details made out with the exactness of an old German picture. Through the door the sick nun is seen in bed with her prayer-book, Madonna and crucifix near her. The attendant sister has fallen asleep, with her beautiful head leaning against the side of the chimney, and the *Bambino* stands in the air in a circle of light holding his little hand over the broth on the fire. I do not suppose my description gives you much idea of it, but I think it is a wonder! . . .

Yours affectionately,

L. G. A."

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

"Venice, September 1st, 1872.

Dear Lucy:

Now that I have a quiet Sunday morning, I mean to enjoy an hour or two of conversation

with you across the ocean. I am especially pleased that you retain so pleasant an impression of my dear Florence and of the few days that we were able to pass together. You had not long been gone when we received some urgent and most distressing letters from Marina Baroni (that pretty Venetian friend, whom you met at our house and who asked you to come and see her at Venice) requesting us to come to her without delay. Her only son Paolo, who was ill, as you may remember, had become much worse, and they wanted us to come to them as soon as possible.

So we packed up our things in a great hurry and about the first of June came here to Venice, where we have been ever since. The first sight of Paolo shocked us all. He was all wasted away, as white as wax, and could hardly speak at all. Death was written in every line of his face, and yet, only a few months before, I had seen him strong and handsome, full of hope and courage, and busy with ambitious plans for his future life. But Paolo's illness was not the worst. Though not yet twenty-one years old, he had been for some years past a believer in the doctrines of Renan and the rationalists. I leave you to imagine what it was to look death in the face with such comfort as they can give! I can never forget what sad days those were! Mamma was with him constantly. She was the only one whom he liked to have in his room. Paolo had

been fond of Mamma ever since he was a little child, and now he could hardly bear to have her out of his sight.

But it was very seldom that he would let her speak a word of religion. He was courageous by nature and education, and by family tradition, and he accepted his fate with a certain proud resignation. If he sometimes listened to a few words about Our Saviour it seemed to be only from politeness or because he loved the speaker. There were many pious people, both here and in Florence, who made daily and almost hourly prayers for him, with such faith and perseverance that I felt they could not all be wasted. Mamma, though often repelled, was never discouraged, and while on the one hand she served him with such devoted attention and affection that he became absolutely dependent upon her, on the other, she lost no opportunity of speaking a good word. At last he began to find great difficulty in breathing, and he thought—poor boy—that it was the air of Venice, and that if he could go up into the mountains, he should find relief.

They took him away up to San Marcello, where we were two years ago and where his heart seemed to revive at the sight of the green, wooded hills and the pastures full of flowers and the venerable old chestnut trees which he had known and loved as a child. And then—who says that God does not hear prayers?—the cloud passed away that had overshadowed his life, and,

we cannot say how, by one of those miracles of grace which in all ages happen now and then, Paolo became a Christian. Oh Lucy, only think what cause of thanksgiving for us all! From the aged nun, who had never seen him, but who heard of his sad state and prayed for him in her convent, down to the little children in Gigina's school who recited a prayer every day for the *amico malato della Signora Francesca*. He died penitent, humble, and at peace.

So much for our summer! Of course we have had little heart for anything else. The Marchesa Nerli is quite well and has been on to Venice for a few days. It was a great pleasure to see her again. We shall probably go back to Florence in the course of a week or two. Good-bye. Much love from Papa and Mamma, and an affectionate embrace from

Your old and ever loving friend,
Fanny."

On the evening of January 25th, 1874, Mr. and Mrs. James Russell Lowell had been dining with the Alexanders, and Aunt Lucia told us how the next morning he came bringing his beautiful sonnet to Francesca and the following letter, which was written on the opposite page.

"Florence, 25 January, 1874.

Dear Miss Alexander:

Whether the sonnet which you will find on the next page be bad or good, the blame or

praise must be laid at the door of your mother's second cup of coffee, which kept me awake long enough to compose it. I daresay your modesty will be tempted to deny the justice of my verses, but you must remember that poetry has a larger privilege of frankness than prose. I wish I could repay your music of last evening with better of my own, but I daresay the saint under whose image a *pifferaro* is doing his worst, finds a melody in the good will if none in the pipes.

With kindest regards to your mother and father, and many thanks for the newspapers.

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

Mrs. Lowell's rheumatism is better this morning, thanks to the gracious intervention of Saint Opodeldoc.

“To F. A.:

Unconscious as the sunshine, simply sweet
And generous as that, thou dost not close
Thyself in art, as life were but a rose
To rumple bee-like with luxurious feet;
Thy higher mind therein finds sure retreat,
But not from care of common hopes and woes;
Thee the dark chamber, thee the unfriended,
 knows,
Although no babbling crowds thy praise repeat:
Consummate artist, who life's landscape bleak
Hast brimmed with sun to many a clouded eye,
Touched to a brighter hue the beggar's cheek,

Hung over orphaned lives a gracious sky,
And traced for eyes, that else would vainly
 seek,
Fair pictures of an angel drawing nigh!"

This sonnet was written in Florence in 1874 and was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of May, 1875.

CHAPTER V

SOME ITALIAN FRIENDS

My aunt's most intimate friend in Florence was the Countess Letizia Rasponi, a granddaughter of Murat, the unfortunate King of Naples. The Countess Rasponi came every day to see Aunt Lucia. She was very fine-looking and always beautifully gowned, quietly, and in perfect taste. She came one autumn day wearing a new green velvet turban, very plain, with no trimming but a beautiful shade of green that was very becoming to her. Aunt Lucia was enchanted with it and asked if she could have one made like it for Francesca. The Countess Rasponi very readily consented and gave her the address of her milliner. When the turban came, it was an exact reproduction of the Countess Rasponi's. But Francesca insisted upon having wide green ribbon strings attached to tie in a bow under her chin. It was no longer a turban. But Francesca's face looked so good and sweet and kind above her great bow that I think on the whole it suited her better than the "stylish" turban. And no one who knew my aunt and Francesca well could associate "style" with either of them. Francesca always wore what she called a "Garibaldi," a loose blouse, and Aunt wore old-fashioned full skirts and little jackets. The latter always said that she never altered her style of dress. Her only extravagance in dress was in her laces. Her little caps were always of the finest Venetian point. She wore these caps when she was quite a young woman. We have a miniature of her painted in one. She loved old, real lace, had inherited beautiful laces from her mother, and added to her stock

with laces from Florence and Venice until she had a really very fine collection.

Although the Alexanders were Protestants, two of their warmest friends were Catholic Cardinals. The Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Agostini, and the Archbishop of Verona, Cardinal Canossa.

Cardinal Agostini was a very saintly man, devoted to the poor of Venice, by whom he was adored. Francesca, in one of her letters, tells how he was arrested in Venice one evening when he was carrying his own mattress on his head to a poor man who was ill. His servants had refused to carry it because the man had some contagious disease. The officers would not believe him, and he was taken to the station house, where he was identified as the Cardinal.

The Archbishop of Verona, Cardinal Canossa, had told our aunt why he decided to enter the church. We were interested in his romantic story, had often admired his picture with its fine, intellectual face, and were much pleased to inherit it. The Marchese Canossa, when a young man, was very much in love with the beautiful Countess Carlotti, who also was in love with him and was delighted when one day her father came to her and said, "The Marchese Canossa wishes to marry you, and it would please me."

The Countess said, "It shall be as you wish, Father."

But when the Marchese Canossa was brought to her, it was the old Marchese, the father of her lover. Count Carlotti insisted upon his daughter's marrying the old Marchese, as he said his honour was involved. The young Marchese Canossa renounced the world and entered the church. The Countess never saw him again until she heard him preach as Archbishop of Verona.

Francesca's dearest friend was the charming and beautiful Countess Marina Baroni, a Venetian. Aunt Lucia and Francesca spent every spring and autumn with her in the Palazzo Rezzonico, her home at Bas-



*Il Dio benedica la Sig. Lucia Alexander
+ L. Card. di Canossa Vescovo di Verona 1897.*

Ritratto



Cabinetto

LODOVICO KAISER

VERONA

CORSO CAVOUR

CARDINAL CANOSSA

sano, in the Veneto. The Countess Baroni wanted our aunt to have us presented at Court in Rome. This idea did not appeal to us at all. There was something that we did want very much, however, and that was to arrange to live at some Italian hotel for the summer, where we would hear Italian spoken. The Countess Marina gave us a letter of introduction to the proprietor of a hotel in the mountains of the Trentino. Through this letter we made some very interesting Italian friends. When we arrived at the hotel, the proprietor was very much surprised to find that we spoke English. He said that he thought all Americans spoke Spanish.

In the two following letters to Miss Lucy Woodbridge, Francesca describes some Italian friends:

“Florence, May 14th, 1871.

Dear Lucy:

I have received, since writing to you, two very interesting letters which gave me the greatest pleasure and for which I thank you with all my heart.

We are just now preparing for a visit to Enrichetta Nerli at Viesca, and after that we expect to go up in the mountains for the summer, returning to Florence probably in September. You ask me to tell you about my friends here, and I am much obliged to you for being interested in them.

Every Sunday after church I go to see my dear Marianna (her likeness stood on my bookcase in Boston, always with flowers about it), and pass one or two delightful hours in her society. She is living now in the old palace in

Florence with her blind father. He is a very grand old gentleman indeed, and seems to me to hold his daughter at a great distance, though he is very fond of her. She is a beautiful woman still, and resembles that Cassandra Capponi who married a Bardi in the Cinquecento, and from whom I suppose my friend is descended. She sits in a large, lofty room which ought to be cheerful, for it looks into one of the loveliest gardens in Florence, a very ancient garden where the rose-bushes have grown into trees, and where the birds sing all day as they do in the woods; a garden all laid out in geometrical patterns, with orange and lemon trees at regular intervals, and a little fountain in the middle that tinkles away sleepily all day to itself. And beyond the garden wall she can look into the country and see the mountains.

But somehow the room never is very cheerful. It is all hung around with the portraits of dead friends and ancestors. I always feel a good deal like an intruder as I go up and down the great, lonely marble staircase, where my footsteps sound so loud in the silence, and where the statues look down on me as they have looked on so many generations of dead and gone Capponi.

There is a beautiful suite of apartments on the first floor, never occupied. But she would not think of living there. They were furnished in some past century for one of the Capponi, who was about to be married. But he died just be-

fore his wedding day, and the rooms have been kept always just as he left them. Even the bed, with its cover of brocaded velvet, is kept always made and ready for an occupant. The best rooms and the best furniture in the palace belong to the dead man, and even the poor blind Marchese, almost at the extremity of life, creeps every day to his chamber in the story above quite uncomplainingly, never thinking of invading the rights of his long-departed relative.

Angelina is very happy now with her new house and pretty little garden. Her husband has some place under the Government, and she thinks him the greatest man in the world. The house and garden are a kingdom to her, and she keeps them in beautiful order. . . .”

The Cassandra Bardi, whom Francesca thinks her friend the Marchesa Farrinola resembles, is a portrait we inherited from our aunt. She is indeed beautiful, with her “ Venetian ” red hair and dark eyes, the coloring as fresh as if it had been painted one hundred years ago instead of in the fifteenth century.

“Florence, June 30th, 1871.

Dear Lucy:

We have been staying with Enrichetta this spring in the Val d’Arno, in the loveliest, sweetest, and most out-of-the-world place you can imagine. I should like to have you know something of what must always be so beautiful a remembrance to me. The villa was large and old,

with a little lawn before it, bordered with rose-bushes, and a sun-dial over the great arch of the stone door. On one side was a well, shaded by great plane trees with stone seats under them, and on the other a little wood, and behind the house another lawn and a pretty, old-fashioned garden, with nothing new or foreign in it but the common Tuscan flowers,—jessamine, larkspur and poppies, and hundred-leafed roses, and those still sweeter damask roses, descended from the plant which the returned Crusaders brought to Florence from the Holy Land, but all larger and sweeter and fresher, it used to seem to me, than any other flowers. And there were old orange and lemon trees, of course, and a border of strawberries which produced a wonderful supply of fruit, and a grape-vine in blossom just then which scented all the air in the neighborhood. Around the villa and its grounds, in no way separated from it, lay the Lattoria, the farms belonging to Enrichetta, with the white houses of the contadini. She lived like a queen in the midst of her little kingdom. Often she reminded me of some queen in an old saint's story, as I saw the reverence and deep affection with which she was regarded by those about her, and the motherly care which she took of their smallest concerns.

The Lattoria of Viesca stands among grand and beautiful mountains, which border the view on all sides, in the midst of the most luxuriant

country which I ever saw. Little streams come rushing down everywhere from the Apennines and running to the Arno, which separates us from the neighboring ancient miniature city of Figline; and along their courses and by the sides of the road grow great oak trees of enormous size.

The fields are divided from the road by hedges, principally of box and white-flowered sweet-brier, and they are planted with fruit trees, under which grows the grain (which was flowering when I was there); while the vines are festooned from one tree to another, so that each field is an orchard, a corn-field, and a vineyard, all in one. There we lived. And now that I have told you about the place, I must say something of the life there.

Early in the morning I was waked sometimes by the singing of the birds, sometimes by that of the contadini. Soon Enrichetta came to my door and we went to picking flowers in the garden and ivy in the woods, and came back, loaded, to the house. Then there was work enough to do. I can shut my eyes now and see the drawing-room with its old-fashioned chairs covered with blue and white brocade, and its marble tables where she and I used to arrange our flowers. And then there was the altar in the little chapel. I think Enrichetta had a confused idea that the painted Madonna over it understood what we were doing, for she would often pause in her work and,

resting her arms on the altar, and looking at the picture with affectionate familiarity, address friendly remarks to it, such as, 'There! You don't have such flowers as these every day. I *know* you are glad to have Francesca here!'

Then we all met at the breakfast table, which was also ornamented with flowers. And after that, Enrichetta used to walk with Mamma under an arched canopy of green which covered a long walk, cool on the warmest day. Then not infrequently she took me with her to visit some of the contadini. Oh, Lucy, how beautiful she used to look in her deep mourning dress, with the wild, barefoot children clustering about her, her little, soft hand playing with their tumbled curls while the parents and grandparents told her all the events of their peaceable lives, and received her unfailing sympathy and attention.

I began this letter as much as a fortnight ago, and now I take it up again in the pretty little mountain town of San Marcello, eighteen miles above Pistoia. I will not begin on any long description of San Marcello, but simply tell you that it is a miniature city, with its square and its fountain, its ancient church, and the palace where the Conti Guidi used to live all crowded together, all old and gray and quiet and weed-grown, standing among wonderful chestnut-covered mountains. Girls knit their stockings and tend their little brothers and sisters on the doorsteps of the terrible Conti Guidi, and nobody re-

members them and their greatness. But prayers are still said every day in the old church, as they were nobody knows how many centuries ago. For the church is so old that no one can tell its age.

Good-bye, dear Lucy. Please don't forget me.
Your old and true friend,

Fanny."

A friend of Aunt Lucia's who came often to see her was the Princess Louise Murat. She was interested in hearing about the commanding officers of the Civil War in America, and asked if she could procure a photograph of General Sherman with his autograph. Aunt Lucia wrote to General Sherman and received from him the following letter:

"Headquarters, Army of the United States,
St. Louis, Mo., March 9th, 1876.

Mrs. Francis Alexander,
Florence, Italy.
Dear Madam:

Your good letter of February 15th is received, and I hasten to send you several autographs. With this my note of astonishment that my scrawl should be in demand in the sweet valley of the 'Arno.' I had my photograph taken in Florence by one of Powers' sons, but it was not good. Many others have been made here, but at this instant of time I have not one suitable to enclose with this. But I shall mark your letter so that soon I may be able to fulfill your whole

request. The names of Bonaparte and Murat are as familiar to our ears as to those of Frenchmen or Italians, and I would feel honoured to know that my poor photograph was held and prized by one bearing so honoured a name as either. In due time I will mail to your address a photograph, and will inscribe it, as you suggest, to the Princess Louise Murat.

My daughter, Mrs. Fitch, is now established here in St. Louis. She has a son who manifests all the vigor and intellect of his race. At this moment I know of no one in Florence who could receive for me that sword of which you speak. But at Rome I have at this moment two particular friends to whom I would confide any precious gift. First, Mr. and Mrs. William Scott of New York, known to our Minister, Mr. Marsh, and somehow connected with the building of the Protestant-Episcopal Church there. Second, Mrs. Euphrasia Mackay, c/o Marquand, Hooker & Co., bankers, Rome. The former is a relative, the latter a good friend who resides in St. Louis and would feel proud to bring me a sword from Venice.

With great respects, &c.,

W. T. Sherman, Gen'l."

In connection with the letter from General Sherman, we include this letter from the Rev. Arthur Lawrence, rector of St. Paul's Church, Stockbridge, Mass., in which he tells of General Sherman's great satisfaction at the capture of Fort McAllister:

“My dear Mrs. Alexander:

I have long delayed writing out some reminiscences that you kindly asked me to write. My own part in the Civil War was very small, but some experiences which I had, you were kind enough to find interesting. And at your request, I put them on paper. I think you wish especially an account of the Battle of Fort McAllister. It was at the close of Sherman's march from Atlanta to the sea.

We left Atlanta on or about the fourteenth of November, 1864. Sherman had sent back part of his army, under General Thomas, to meet the Confederate Army under General Hood, which it did a few weeks later and in great measure destroyed it at Nashville. Sherman himself, with about sixty thousand men, started across the country for Savannah. General Slocum commanded the left wing, General Howard the right. I was at that time acting aide-de-camp on Howard's staff, having been for months in the western army as a delegate of the Christian Commission, before this campaign began. We had good weather and good roads.

It was most amusing to see the negroes along the march; many of them were crazy to come with us. I remember seeing one negro woman dash into a house, seize a pair of shoes, apparently her sole possession, and rush after the troops.

When we reached the outskirts of Savannah,

which was occupied by the Confederates under General Hardee, it became necessary to capture Fort McAllister, which commanded the Ogeechee River, which gave an outlet to and communicated with the sea. Hazen's division was sent down to take it by assault,—which it did very gallantly. The Confederates also defended it very gallantly. You might say that they did not surrender it but were overpowered. General Sherman and General Howard, with part of their respective staffs, witnessed the assault from a rice-mill on the bank of the river. It was within range of the fort, and they fired a few shells at us and we at them. But that had very little to do with the main action. The river between the mill and the fort was very winding and the distance by water much greater than by a straight line. I was standing close to General Sherman a part of the time and could see how gratified he was as the assault went successfully on.

When all was over he said we must go to the fort, and wished Howard to go with him. There was a leaky old boat by the bank, with three clumsy oars. Into it the two generals climbed, taking Captain Nichols of Sherman's staff, who afterwards wrote the 'Story of the Great March,' and Colonel Strong and myself of Howard's staff, and an orderly. It was rather a singular fact that out of that whole Western army, two out of the three men who started to row had

learned to row on the Charles River, namely, Nichols and myself.

Off we pushed, taking our chances of torpedoes, and started against the tide. It was rather a hard row, but there was a beautiful moonlight and the water was smooth. Sherman was in the highest spirits—and no wonder, for the capture of the Fort had insured the success of the march.

He told stories and called for songs, and I never again shall sing solos with so distinguished a chorus. Sherman was using a paddle over the side to counteract, by steering, the inequality of the three oars, but by and by his arm got tired from an old wound (at Shiloh or Bull Run, I have forgotten which). So I perched in the stern and took the paddle, while he sat with his back against my knees and talked like a mathematical professor about the ‘resultant of force’ in connection with working of the paddle.

General Hazen met us at the bank when we arrived, and we went to supper with him. While we sat at supper, Major Anderson, the Commander of the Fort, was brought in as a prisoner, and General Sherman questioned him. He bore himself very well. It was very dramatic when Sherman said to the negro who was waiting on us,—Major Anderson’s private servant who an hour before had been his slave—‘Now, Robert’—I think that was his name—‘Now, Robert, remember that you are a free man.

Don't be afraid, but speak right up and answer my questions.'

And he did.

It was most interesting and sad to go over the Fort. There were torpedoes planted about, whose position of course we did not know. Some one near us stepped on one which exploded and wounded or killed him, and a piece came very near General S. One young lad, I remember, was lying dead among the guns, bayoneted through the head, and his cheek, when I touched it, was as soft as a girl's. I don't think he could have been more than fifteen years old, but by that time the war at the South, as Grant said, 'had robbed the cradle and the grave.'

That was a great night and I shall never forget it. One episode occurs to me in connection with those times. It occurred while we were lying in camp outside Savannah before its capture. We were on a plantation whose owner had very naturally fled as our army approached. We used to make a bright fire in the evening and sit around it and sing. You know that there were many songs composed on both sides, each ridiculing the other. One of the favorite Northern ones was called the 'Year of Jubilo.' It went somewhat thus:

'Say, darkies, have you seen old Massa with the
mustache on his face

Go down the road sometime this mornin' like
he's gwine to leave the place,

He saw the smoke 'way up the ribber where the
sunken gunboats lay—
And he took up his hat and he left mighty
sudden and I spec he run away.

CHORUS

Old Massa's gone, aha! the darkies stay, oho!
It must be now that the Kingdom's comin' and
the year of Jubilo.'

I happened to sing that, and an old negro stepped out of the crowd of negroes who had been standing listening. 'Dat's true, Massa, you sing true song.'

All this, when I come to read it over, seems very insignificant, but I promised to write it out for you and here it is. Your personal interest in the writer may give it for you what interest it lacks in itself. Mother, after a very grave illness of last December, is bright as ever, though her physical strength has not returned. My son is well and very happy at Cambridge. With love to Fanny, I am always faithfully and affectionately yours,

A. L."

CHAPTER VI

THE GIOSTRA

FRANCESCA'S first large book, *The Sorellaccia*, was drawn for Mrs. Quincy Shaw, who had been most generous to Francesca's poor contadini. Mr. Newman¹ thought the drawings in the *Sorellaccia* so remarkable that he asked Sir Frederick Leighton to go with him to see Francesca and *The Sorellaccia*. When Sir Frederick Leighton saw these drawings, he said, "No private individual should have this book. Let me take it and I will put it into the hands of the best living engraver." The book, however, was promised to Mrs. Shaw, who, with her unfailing kindness, once loaned it to Mrs. Joseph Lyman, a sister of our aunt, Mrs. Tasker Swett. Mrs. Lyman sent for all the family to come and see it at her house. We were delighted with the exquisite work, and little thought that we should ever own a copy of it.

Later, Francesca's large book, *The Roadside Songs of Tuscany*, was purchased by Mr. Ruskin, who distributed the drawings among different museums in England. After Mr. Ruskin's death, Aunt Lucia, with the assistance of his cousin, Mrs. Severn, collected these drawings and had them reproduced in a large book called *Tuscan Songs*. Mr. Shaw was so much pleased with this reproduction that he decided to have a few copies made of *The Sorellaccia*. And with the great generosity which characterized both Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, they sent several copies to Francesca, and it is one of these precious copies which we have inherited.

Many of the Alexanders' Boston friends were much interested in Francesca's work and gave most gener-

¹ Mr. Henry R. Newman. An American artist living in Florence.

ously to aid her in trying to alleviate the suffering among the poor in Italy. Among these were Francesca's cousins, Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Swett, Mrs. Mason, Mrs. Shaw, the Misses Mason, and Mrs. Winthrop, Mrs. John L. Gardner, Mr. and Mrs. Wales, Mrs. Russell and Miss Emily Russell, Miss Lilly Cleveland, and many others who were interested in her good work, and some of these names were long remembered by the poor contadini whom they had been the means of helping. The following letter is from Aunt Lucia to our mother:

“Abetone, July 14th, 1874.

Dear Mary:

I was very glad of your letter, as I always am. Hardly anything interests me so much as the details from home about family and friends, and the more minute the better. I really meant to thank you for it before, but the heat seemed to come all at once and I hardly knew how to make the preparations to come here, which were neither small nor few. This house was built a hundred years ago in the best manner, and is calculated, and I suppose intended, to last centuries. It was amply supplied, I suppose, at that time, but little or nothing has been done since, and we had to send up almost everything we needed for housekeeping. This Fanny undertook, and Mr. Alexander attended to supplying such provisions as would keep. I attended to all the clothes and now we are resting on our oars. We live in a very curious fashion, everything we consume being brought many miles. I had

some little matters for the dear girls that I hoped to be able to take them myself before now, and not long since I had a chance of sending them, so I thought I had better do so. I sent as large a box, and squeezed in just as many things, as I thought would do, and I was only sorry they were so few. It is very seldom any one offers to take anything home, and it is very natural, on account of difficulty with the custom house. We have the loveliest walks, and I inherit my father's love of walking. When you write, please tell me particularly of all your children—Sam, Willie, and all. Mr. A. and Fanny join me in sending much love to them all, the Doctor, and last, but by no means least, yourself. Do write when you can.

Yours most affectionately,

Lucia."

Our grandfather was indeed a great walker, and even when he was quite old was fond of taking long walks. Dr. Lothrop, the Unitarian minister, once said to him, "Colonel Swett, I would like to join you in one of your walks some day."

So one morning Grandfather called for him. As they started out, Dr. Lothrop asked, "Where did you think of walking this morning?"

"Well," said Grandfather, "I thought we might just step over to Salem."

"Colonel Swett," said Dr. Lothrop, "I proposed taking a walk with you; not a pilgrimage."

James Russell Lowell wrote as follows to Miss Lilly Cleveland from his home at Elmwood on the 17th of June, 1875:

“Dear Miss Cleveland:

I thank you heartily for letting me have the pleasure of reading dear Fanny Alexander’s letter. It was so simply natural and full of right feeling that I seemed to see her as I read.

There are parts of the letter (those about the *Giostra*) that I think ought to be secured in some permanent form. Few Italians think of describing such things; few strangers have the luck to see them. The heavy roller of the nineteenth century (which flattens out everything to a decorous lawn level) will soon be going over them. Surely ’twould be no breach of confidence to copy out those passages that have an historical and æsthetic interest—(the latter they already have, the former will soon come to them)—and print them in *The Nation*. Having done this and got her forgiveness (you may make me the scapegoat if you like) ask her for more. She tells so simply what she sees, and sees with such unadulterated eyes, that what she describes has the rare value of solid fact.

With kindest remembrances from both of us to Mrs. Cleveland and yourself, I remain always very sincerely yours,

J. R. Lowell.”

In her letters Francesca describes several *giostras*. The one to which Mr. Lowell alludes is in the following letter to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Florence, May 11th, 1875.

Dear Lilly:

I have heard how much trouble you have been having this winter with your dear mother's illness. I cannot bear to think of any shadow on your life or hers, or on that beautiful and happy home where I passed the happiest days of my stay in America.

You will perhaps be surprised to hear that two years ago, just after we had parted from you, we decided to leave Venice and go to Abetone, where we could have an apartment in the Government house. The first day's journey took us to Pistoia. The next day we went over the beautiful mountain road among the chestnut trees and the pastures and the little old towns and villages to dear old Abetone, where we have passed so many happy summers, and before that night we were fairly established in our rooms at the Administration. How much there was to see and to hear, and how glad our friends were to see us! So there we stayed until the autumn. It was pleasant to go the old walks again and to live among the old friends. If you could have seen the presents that they brought us! The baskets of eggs, and wild strawberries, and branches of cherry trees with the fruit attached, and balls of butter, and mushrooms, and strings of little fish from the streams, and flowers innumerable.

Last year they sang the *giostra* again. I had always wished to hear another, and now, after

five years that none had been performed, we have a very beautiful one. I have told you so often about the *giostra* that I should not say anything about it now were it not that this was a very original one, and very unlike any I had ever seen before.

Of all the stories in the world, they chose for performance the death of King Louis of France (I believe they thought there was only one King of that name), and the Old French Revolution. Of course it was all set to the old melancholy music and simple stately poetry, and was performed by the men and boys of the neighborhood in that beautiful green field near our house. The excitement about it in all the country was indescribable. Everybody came from all the scattered villages and farms for miles and miles. Shepherds left their flocks unguarded on the mountains; one man whom I know working in the marenna made a journey of nearly two hundred miles, and much of it on foot, for the sake of being present. Nothing could equal the beauty of the scene, as all these people, in the gayest dresses, sat or stood in scattered groups on the hillside which looked down on the performers in the deep sunshine of a late August afternoon, while the shadows of the near and heavy white clouds floated occasionally over all.

The true and terrible story had been turned into a pious legend, the poor King enacting the part of a saint. He did not look much like the

portraits of his prototype. He was a small thin man with an ugly but very expressive face, burnt to a dark brown by long exposure to the sun, rough black hair, streaked with gray, and fiery black eyes. He was much bent by continual farm work and looked so queer in a blue frock with a lace ruffle around the neck, and a tall pasteboard crown, that at first appearance it was quite impossible not to laugh. However, his voice was magnificent for power, sweetness, and expression. Every word which he sang could be heard distinctly by even the most remote spectators on the hill. And he had everybody in tears before he had sung many minutes.

The Queen was yet more original. Poor Marie Antoinette! She was a charcoal-burner of immense stature (much taller than her husband) with a face rather handsome for a man, though in a somewhat grim and savage style, but positively terrible for a woman. She towered above her assailants in a red gown, with an old lace veil over her short black hair, and performed her part energetically.

Robespierre, a handsome young shepherd who sang a little out of tune, wore his usual dress with the addition of a red sash, while Marat, a little old man who commonly takes diabolical parts, owing to a genius for making up faces and jumping, having no red sash to wear, had, with a bold conception, girded his waist with a red *pezza* bordered with green, commonly used to

bandage his baby. But all these queer-looking people performed with the artistic feeling which seems universal in that part of the country.

The effect on the spectators was magical. The King had sufficient good sense not to affect royalty, of which he knew nothing. He was a simple countryman fallen into the hands of brigands, tormented with fears for his family, bewildered as to his own condition and the cause of so much ill-treatment, but patient and devotedly pious. And not trying for too much, he was both pathetic and dignified. As for the poor children, they took it all in earnest and cried till their eyes were quite red and swollen. The King, after being enveloped in a large sheet, was beheaded at last, with a sword, by a young man of the *guardia nazionale* of Cutigliano, among the sobs and indignant remonstrances of the hundreds of people on the hillsides.

Since we came back to Florence, we have passed a quiet, busy, and most uneventful winter. We have had a great pleasure in having the Forbeses here this year. Indeed, they now spend every winter in Florence. Papa and Mamma join me in many affectionate messages to your mother and yourself. Edwige thanks you much for your remembrance of her, and I remain always, dear Lilly,

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny.”

“Florence, October 6th, 1877.

Dear Lilly:

I take up my pen after about two months, to finish this letter which I began last summer at Abetone, and which I was not able to finish at the time, as I was obliged to draw several portraits in great haste, for friends who were going away from the hotel.

The great event at Abetone this year was the visit of the Bishop of Pistoia, who came to *cresimare* all the children. He comes only once in several years so that all the children have to be produced, in arms and out, not only from the little village but from many distant and solitary farms in sheltered hollows of the mountains. Many of the children had never left home before.

Of course there were great preparations. More than a week beforehand the priest sent to ask my assistance. He was anxious to give the Bishop a suitable reception and he thought that his servant could cook a fair dinner. But she had never made a pudding. Now, as the Bishop was coming on a fast-day, the pudding was more than usually important, and he begged me to help him out of his difficulties by making one myself. The pudding had to serve for twelve priests besides the Bishop, and I had no oven. Nothing but a great open chimney. Lena, my servant, looked very solemn about it, but expressed a strong conviction that we should succeed, and so we did. The pudding, magnified

into two, was completed on the very morning of the Bishop's arrival, and, after being inspected with grave admiration by many of the inhabitants, was carried off in state by the priest's servant Philomena, Lena accompanying as a guard of honor. Both the women looked as serious as they did when marching in the August procession with the relics of S. Leopoldo. Meanwhile Mamma was called upon to fold the napkins and superintend the setting of the table, while Papa undertook to provide the flowers, and brought some really splendid roses from Fiamalbo, five miles down the mountain, which made the dinner table quite magnificent.

The Bishop, after all, did not look very formidable. He was a thin, sober, elderly man, with a face expressing humility and patience rather than stateliness. The service in the church was beautiful. One little girl made her appearance in this world that morning just in time not to miss the Bishop's visit, and, having been bandaged in the usual fashion and ornamented with a cap and pink ribbons, was wrapped up in a blanket and carried off two miles to the church, where her quiet and decorous behavior served as a good example to persons of more mature age. After the Bishop's departure, the priest (who is of *contadino* origin) came to express his thanks, and this is what he said: 'The Bishop is a very abstemious man and keeps a great many fasts, but he did ask for a second help of the pudding.'

After all, the pleasantest days at Abetone were the last; after the people were all gone from the hotel, it seemed then more like old times. The autumn flowers are the loveliest of all, I think, in the mountains; all the fields are full of a sort of purple crocus, and the banks are covered with fringed gentian such as you have in America, and the mountain ash trees, which are generally planted about the houses, are quite weighed down with their bunches of red berries. Then the air is of a crystalline clearness and the sky of a deep blue, and everything so bright and beautiful that life seems more than ever worth having. The very remembrance of those days makes me happier.

I leave you now that I may write a few lines to your mother. Much love to Pauline and her family and all our friends.

Yours affectionately,
Fanny."

CHAPTER VII

1880 to 1884

ON March 27th, 1880, after an illness of a few months, Uncle Alexander died in Florence. The Alexanders had been such a happy united family that the parting brought to Aunt Lucia and Francesca the deepest sorrow. All through our uncle's illness, no one ever heard from him an impatient word. I believe he was one of the best and kindest men who ever lived. In his manner there was at times a certain bluntness, and he was less tactful than Aunt Lucia. Yet they had equally kind hearts, and no one ever came to them in trouble without finding help and sympathy. Their being such a truly happy family was not solely because of their great love for one another. In their deep religious feeling, their work, their interests, and their pleasures, they were all absolutely congenial.

Each had artistic talent; each loved music, poetry, and flowers, and life in the country. They especially delighted in long country walks, and in one of her letters to our mother, Aunt Lucia writes, "I inherit my father's love of walking."

Often they would start out in the afternoon for a walk through the beautiful country, stopping to rest in some pleasant place on the way home while Aunt Lucia read aloud. Francesca writes to her friend, Miss Lilly Cleveland, "This is the pleasantest time of the day."

It seems sad that Uncle Alexander could not have lived to know of Francesca's fame and of the great appreciation of her wonderful work. It was more than a year and a half after our uncle's death that Mr. Ruskin came into the lives of Aunt Lucia and Fran-

cesca. It seemed almost like a blessed consolation sent from Heaven, bringing, as it did, Mr. Ruskin's brotherly affection for Francesca and his devoted love for Aunt Lucia, whom he always called his "*Mamma*."

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

"Abetone, August 7, 1880.

Dear Lucy:

I am truly obliged to you for your kind thought of me in my trouble, and for your beautiful letter, which was more of a comfort to me than I can tell you. I read it over and over. You seem to understand, as few can do, both the greatness of our loss and the uncommon consolation which has been given us. His passing away was most peaceful and beautiful. Almost his last words were, 'I put all my trust in the Lord.' He had been feeble, as I think you know, and mostly confined to his bed for several months. During all this time he was in a most happy state of mind, and, strange to say, appeared to enjoy his life more, almost, than I have ever known him to do. He would lie and watch the sky and clouds with never-failing enjoyment. He had always loved them when in health, and much more in his illness. He used often to console himself by repeating over passages of the Bible and hymns, of which he knew a great many. In particular, I used often to hear him recite that beautiful hymn, 'Up to the hills I lift my eyes.' It was a great mercy that his sight

and hearing remained quite good until the end. His voice also, strange to say, remained always quite clear and firm and not at all like that of an old person. He was served all through his illness with the greatest devotion, both by my good Edwige, whom you know, and the good manservant who was also most devoted to him. And they both said, after he was gone, that they had never known him under any circumstances to lose his patience for a single moment. We never realized how old he had grown; he continued up to the end so young in spirit.

He passed away at last in his sleep, without pain or struggle. Death, as it came to him, had no horror, and will never seem so terrible to me again. It would take too long, dear Lucy, for me to tell you all the kindness that we received, in the first days of our trouble, from every one about us. Everything was done that could be done to help and comfort us. The funeral was on Easter Sunday, and all our nearest friends were present.

The service was very simple, according to the custom of the Italian Evangelical Church, but very truthful and comforting. The Catholics who were present were very much impressed, especially by the hymn sung about the grave in the open air. What this loss is to us, dear Lucy, you can imagine better than I can tell you. All the world seems changed to us. We have lost the principal interest and occupation of our

lives, but I would not complain. I have written you much on this subject, being sure of your affectionate sympathy, but I will try now to pass on to other things, though this is always in my mind.

We came up here early in June, and Mamma, who was much exhausted, has improved in health and strength since she has been here. She is resigned and tranquil, but it seems as if the world were over for her. Of my own life I have not much to tell you. I am working very hard on a book which I began a year and a half ago and which I think would please you if you should see it. Marina Baroni, who attracted you so much when you were here at our house, has now two grandchildren. She is the youngest and prettiest grandmother that I ever saw. Please give best love to your dear Aunt Rebecca and accept the same yourself from

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny Alexander."

From our aunt to our mother:

"Asiago, July 8th, 1881.

Dear Mary:

I was very glad to receive your kind and pleasant letter. We find at present that *les extremes se touchent*; we have passed from the most magnificent palace, the most luxuriant country, and the most elegant old-fashioned aristocracy, to houses thatched with straw and

blackened by smoke, a barren valley high in the mountains, and poor people whose language we cannot understand. It is a very poor place for Fanny's book,¹ which is her main interest at present, as well as mine; for we find neither place nor people in the least picturesque. But she got it a good way along at Bassano, where everything was so beautiful, and she is finishing up the music and the poetry now. We hardly know how to manage the summers away from Abetone, but there had been there thirty cases of smallpox and six deaths from it, and though it had almost died out, and the risk was small, I did not dare to go, and it has proved just as well. For Fanny's visits to her friends have quite brought her back to her old self and her singularly happy nature. We were very glad in the spring to see Cousin Joseph Coolidge's daughters, most lovely, interesting girls. Elise reminded me very much of dear Aunt Tasker. She has much the same extreme refinement and elegance of manner. She looks rather delicate, but her sister is the picture of blooming health. We made great friends and they were much admired.

Please thank the Doctor for his letters. I always feel that writing to one of you is just the same as writing to you both. But I will try to write to him the next time. My present manner

¹ *Roadside Songs of Tuscany*. Published in America under the title of *Tuscan Songs*.

of living offers very little that is worth his reading or my writing. Please also thank him for the poetry he was kind enough to copy for me. I liked it very much. I had never seen it before, and have no idea who wrote it. I envy you having the chance to read all the nice American books I see noticed in the papers. Mr. Dana sent us his description of Cuba. It contained his autograph, which made it doubly interesting. But I prefer 'Two Years Before the Mast.' I cannot tell you how much we enjoyed seeing him and his family in the winter. One daughter was Protestant and the other Catholic.

I hope you often see Charlotte and Wilmina and the children. Though you are so far apart, you seem to take so much comfort together. Fanny and I send much love to you, the Doctor, Lilly, Lou and May, and Sam and William, when you write to them.

Yours very affectionately,

Lucia."

On October 8th, 1882, Mr. Ruskin paid his first visit to our aunt and cousin. In the three following letters, Francesca describes Mr. Ruskin's visits, and also the effect they had upon her work.

Francesca to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

"Florence, December 9th, 1882.

Dearest Lilly:

I do not feel as if I could ever thank you enough for your beautiful long letter, which con-

tained so much that made me happy, but above all, that hope of seeing you again before so very many months! Your account of the Dedication service at Mt. Desert was beautiful and most touching, and I do wish that I could have been there, to help you all arrange the blackberry vines and wild roses and so forth beforehand, which would have been just the work for me. How lovely it was to have your dear aunt's last work on the altar-cloth, and the whole service must have been something never-to-be-forgotten. As for your uncle, Bishop Doane, I should think it would have been almost more than he could bear. But I see by your letter that you are in a great hurry to hear all my 'wonderful adventures' and so I will begin to write them down as well as I can. If you have read Mamma's letter to Mr. Wales you know already how it all happened.

Mr. Newman had been in love with my book ¹ for a long while, and when Mr. Ruskin, who is his intimate friend, came to Florence, he spoke to him about it in such a way that he (Mr. R.) expressed a wish to see it. When Mr. Newman came around to make an appointment for him to come, I must say I was a good deal frightened, for I had heard that he was a very hard man, and severe in his judgment and very difficult to please. And I thought that Mr. Newman was mistaken in the extravagant value which he set

¹ *The Roadside Songs of Tuscany.*

upon my work. However, I cannot imagine why people should have given me such an account, for he proved to be just the contrary. A very pleasant, elderly gentleman with a kind face and a fine voice and very simple friendly manners . . . nothing about him that I should think even a baby could be afraid of! He spent a very long time in looking over my book, examining the smallest details very minutely but without finding fault with anything, much to my surprise; indeed, he appeared to me to be only too much disposed to be pleased with everything. However, perhaps this was only politeness.

One thing I soon observed, that he cared more for the *intention* of the picture than the execution and always knew exactly what I *meant* to express, even when it seemed to me that I had failed in representing it. I never saw anybody who could enter so entirely into the *meaning* of a picture. After he had looked at a few pages, he said, 'I see that you have put pretty much all your life into this book.' Which was true, but I could not see how he knew it.

He liked the drawing of a basket in one of the pictures and Mamma began to tell him how the particular basket, from which it was drawn, had made many journeys to the prison and back, at the time when a poor young servant-girl whom I knew (a great unfortunate in every way) was shut up there for stealing. I tried to stop her telling it; because I had heard he was so very

rigid in his ideas, I thought he would be shocked at my having anything to do with a woman in such a place. But he, seeing my confusion, said very kindly and dropping his voice, ‘ “*In prison and ye visited me!*” ’

After looking at the book, he talked to us some time about its destination and went away, saying he should write to us about it. However, I did not think we should ever hear from him again, but I did him an injustice. For the next day, there arrived a letter of four closely written pages (in the poetical style which you are accustomed to in his books) and containing the remarkable proposition which you know, to buy my book and place it in his museum. Dear Lilly, however much you were astonished when you heard it, I am very sure that you could not have been so much so as I was—I was perfectly bewildered, and had to read the letter over and over to be sure that there was no mistake. To think of my book—which I had supposed would remain, like Pauline’s, among my friends, which contained all the impressions of my out-of-the-world, uneventful life, with the portraits of my contadini friends, with the flowers of which I could remember where every one grew, and even with the likenesses of such things as Mamma’s work-table and the window of my little room at Abetone and the copper pitcher from our kitchen there—to think of all that going to a museum! It seemed almost like being put in a museum my-

self! And to think of Mr. Ruskin, whom, until the day before, I had regarded with a singular mixture of terror and respectful admiration, proposing seriously to come up to my sky-parlour and see me work, for that was what he said in his letter, requesting leave to do so as if it were a great favor, though it is a privilege enjoyed by all the beggars who choose to avail themselves of it! To me it all seemed just impossible. However, of course there was nothing to do but to accept the combination of honor and confusion which had come upon me.

The preparations for our distinguished visitor were of the simplest, and consisted chiefly in Edwige's flapping about with an old linen duster for half an hour beforehand, after which she put on a clean white apron and sat down with her knitting to admit the *Signor del libro*, as she concluded to call him, after several ineffectual attempts to pronounce his name. A little before the appointed time, he arrived in company with Mr. Newman, whom we had persuaded to come with him by way of making the visit a little less trying. I asked him what he would like to see me draw, and he selected a cluster of cyclamen from among a handful of wild flowers which Edwige had brought me that morning from the country, so I put them on the table before me and went to work. Luckily, I have a pretty sure hand with flowers.

Now, dear Lilly, you have asked me to tell you

all about his conversation, and so I have stopped my writing for a few minutes and tried to think of what he said and how he said it, that I may tell you all that you would like to hear. He is kind and respectful in his manners, more like some old-fashioned Italians whom I have known than like an Englishman; very polite, apparently from a certain natural refinement and capability of entering into the feelings of those about him, but talks no nonsense and makes no compliments. He listens always with great attention to everything which one says, which made me feel a little as if I ought to have something to say worth listening to, which I had not. And when he becomes interested in what he himself is saying, he talks exactly as he writes, and appears always to be thinking aloud. So much for his manner of speaking.

As for what he said, I cannot remember enough of it connectedly to give you a very good account of it, though I can recall some of his remarks. I remember that he took a great deal of notice of a few flowers about the room, regarding them with an interest which amounted to a positive affection, reminding me of no one excepting my own father, who had the same feeling. And when I observed it, he said, ‘*I am* very fond of them. When I was a child, they were pretty much the only companions that I had. I was almost always alone and my mother used to send me to play in the garden, and I used to go

about and look at the flowers, and they became companions to me, and they have seemed like companions to me ever since.'

He said a good deal about my little story of Ida, which he had just read, and quite took my breath away by proposing to take it away and have it printed. He said it would be a very useful religious book (which you may believe I was glad to hear), especially from the absence of all sectarian feeling in it, and he seemed much pleased at the strong friendship and religious sympathy between Ida and myself, belonging as we did to two different and usually opposing churches. And in connection with this, he spoke with much sadness of the enmity between different Christian sects, saying that he had known good Christians, and equally good Christians, in all of them (which is my own experience).

But what surprised me most of all was that he talked to me in the most familiar and even confidential manner about things which concerned himself—of his illness and his recovery, of his work in England, of his friends there, living and dead, and of many of his own interests, and seemed even to find a certain comfort in doing so, just exactly as the poor women who come in from the country to bring me a bunch of flowers and have an hour's gossip talk to me of their own troubles and cares and pleasures.

And so now, dear Lilly, I think I have written you a pretty full account of the *memorable visit*,

as you call it—the only full account which I have written to any one. I had almost forgotten to answer one of your questions. I thought of showing him the ‘garden on the roof’ but had not sufficient courage to do so, though I daresay he would have liked it. With regard to my sentiments, of which you ask me to speak, I am afraid I did not have any beyond bewilderment. To tell the truth, I have only quite lately begun to understand a little what has happened to me. He came twice again to see us but did not come again to my room, and before he took leave finally, he had come to treat us with familiar and even (as it seemed to us) affectionate friendship, and when he left us at last, it was with tears in his eyes.

And now, though I have told you such a very long story, I must just add a few words more to tell you how it ended. Soon after his departure, Edwige came to us in trembling agitation to say that the *Signor del libro*, when he said good-bye to her, had given her, as she thought, a soldo, because she had carried some things downstairs for him, but it did not look to her like any soldo that she ever saw before, and she wanted us to look at it. It proved to be a piece of gold, the first which she had ever possessed. At first she was in great distress, thinking he must have given it to her by mistake for a soldo and that she ought to find some means of returning it. But when she found that he had given another just like it

to the man-servant Raffaello, her conscience was tranquillized.

A day or two afterwards she told me that finding herself in the possession of so much money, she had given a party, and I feared, from the tone of latent excitement in which she spoke of it, she had been imitating the prodigal son and wasting her substance in riotous living. However, it proved that the party consisted exclusively of her grandchildren and the entertainment of roast chestnuts, so my mind was relieved. And she spent all the rest of her money in winter clothes for the poorer members of her family.

Dear Lilly, it seems to me that I have written you a volume and not a letter, but you said you wanted to hear all these things, and so I've taken you at your word. I'm so much pleased about your cottage in the mountains. I think that the building of that cottage was the happiest thing that you could possibly have done for yourselves, and that text, '*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help,*' comes home to my heart in a peculiar way. My dear father was always saying over to himself the poetical version of that psalm: *Up to the hills I lift my eyes*: and I know it all by heart from hearing him say it. What a beautiful place it must be from your account! All that you tell me about our dear Pauline Shaw and her family is to me most interesting.

Dear Lilly, do write to me soon if you can. Your letters are the greatest comforts. And tell me if I may really build on the hope of seeing you here, for I am almost afraid to set my heart on it. With best wishes for a happy Christmas to you all, I remain always

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny."

"Dear Lilly:

You asked me to write you *everything* that had happened, so I will tell you that, after the good fortune which had befallen me became known, my work and myself became objects of general curiosity, and my peaceable little room was filled from one week's end to another with the strangest variety of people that you can imagine, of every possible nationality. At first they used to try and obtain an introduction. Afterwards, they laid aside all ceremony, and simply walked in. Often there would be as many as four languages spoken at once. After people heard that Mr. Ruskin had looked over me while I worked, everybody else wanted to look over me, and it never made the smallest difference what I was doing.

I remember one day a party of English people came to look at me while I was copying out a list of names for my index, and they said it was *most wonderful!* The only wonderful thing about it

was that I could do it without making a mistake when these people were looking at me all the while and talking to me. And there were so many near-sighted people who would put their heads between me and the paper that I was working upon, and then expect me to go on just the same; and other people would carry off two or three of my pens to try. I was always finding myself short of pens in consequence. But such a strange variety of people as I have seen! There were Mr. Ruskin's *adorers*, who would ask where he stood when he came to my room and then, with much solemn emotion, would go and stand in the same spot. And then there were his enemies, some of whom regarded me with positive malignity, made up faces at my work and accused me of not doing it as I said I did; while others looked upon me as an innocent victim and warned me sadly of the ill-treatment that I must shortly expect to receive. Then there were the professional sight-seers who looked on Edwige and myself exactly as they would have looked on any kind of curious wild beasts, and appeared to be taking notes of our habits.

I remember one old lady who, after reading some of the little songs, asked who translated them, and on hearing that I had done so, remarked to the people near her, 'Oh! Then she is a poetess! I never saw one before, and I've always wanted to. I must have a look and see what she is like!' And, arranging her spectacles,

she turned and took a long, comfortable stare at me. But she made no further remark and, I fear, was not pleased, and did not think I looked poetical.

Some people seemed mortally afraid of me (Only think of *me* as an object of terror!) and kept at a distance and talked in whispers and changed color painfully if I spoke to them. Others paid me extravagant and not always intelligible compliments. I have been much puzzled to know what one gentleman meant who, after remaining silent until near the end of his visit, began to say in an impressive manner, '*If Fra Bartolomeo could come out of his grave . . .*' and then did not finish his sentence. He repeated the same words again, however, after a short interval and yet again several times, until I asked him what there was that made him think of Fra Bartolomeo. And he then said, 'If Fra Bartolomeo could come out of his grave, I think he would want to take drawing lessons!'

Dear Lilly, I am sure you must think that I am exaggerating, but I assure you that it is not so and that all which I tell you really happened, just as I tell it! So I feel now as if I had been temporarily on the list of *distinguished people*. But it is all over now. With the departure of the book, everybody ceased to take any notice of me, and my room is quiet now, as it was before.

But I forgot to say that while the exhibition was going on, the country people kept coming just the same, and bringing their presents of eggs and lemons and flowers, and wanting a breakfast and a gossip. So you may imagine the combination. The quiet of my life at present seems to me like some unusual luxury, but the best part of it all remains—that is, a good provision for all my friends, for a very long time to come—and more still *the doubling and more* of the price of all my pictures. So that I have good reason to be thankful for myself and others.

I have just now received a present—some seeds of flowers from the Garden of Gethsemane! An English lady who went to the Holy Land gathered them herself and brought them away, and she gave a few to a friend who gave them to me. I do so hope that they may grow and do well. But I care more about the terrace now for thinking that maybe next spring you may be there with me, and I mean to have it *very pretty indeed* when you come, and to plant all the flowers that will probably be in blossom then.

We are just now preparing to go away for the summer, and I think we shall go first of all to Palazzo Rezzonico, where we went last year (that is, to Marina's beautiful house near Bassano). If I had your address, I should like to write to you from there and tell you many things about the place. But I must leave you now. Do

write soon, and meanwhile receive best love and a kiss from

Your affectionate friend,
Fanny."

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

Dear Lucy:

After so long, I have so many, many things to write you. I think you must have felt disposed to laugh at me when you received my last letter. It makes me laugh, myself, now to think how entirely I was upset by my good fortune though, after all, I think I was excusable, considering how very sudden and unexpected it was. My room is constantly full of people who come to see, not me and my work, but the book which Mr. Ruskin has bought. I feel sure that most of them would come just as soon to see his hat and walking-stick, if he had left them there. At first all this amused me, but I am now beginning to be a little tired of it all.

Again I take up my pen, which I laid down more than a month ago, just as I was writing that I was growing a little tired, and my troubles were only just beginning! I have been so tired and so confused that I have not been really able to write to you. As soon as I began to say that my book was almost finished and that I could not make any more appointments to show it to any one, *then* indeed people *did* begin to

come! And I had the strangest people, and of all nationalities under the sun, and speaking so many languages all at once that my poor little quiet room seemed like a second tower of Babel.

But it is all over now, thank Providence. The book is gone and I have passed out of the reflected light in which I have lived for so long, and relapsed into my usual obscurity, in which I cannot deny that I feel much more comfortable. I cannot tell you how I have had to work this past month.

The book ought to have gone long ago, but it was really necessary that it should go the first of May at the latest. I have worked against time, increasing my hours from four to five, and it was a providence my eyes held out. But there have been more providences than one about this book. I really must tell you what a great bit of fortune I had about sending it to England, which was what I was particularly anxious about. An English Quaker lady came to see it, a very sweet, good lady, and asked me how I was going to send it. And when I said I did not know, to my great astonishment she said, in the simplest manner possible, that she should like to take it herself. When I found that the good lady was in earnest, I wrote to Mr. Ruskin to know what I should do, and as it proved that the lady was a friend of his, he accepted her offer. So on Monday last she went away with the book in her arms, for she would not carry it in any other way. And I sup-

pose that by this time it is in London. We have had a great pleasure this spring in having here Mrs. Christopher Chadwick, who is a very old friend of ours, and was extremely kind when we were in America. Marina has invited us again to Bassano and I should like to be there better than anything else. But the spring holds back this year, and we cannot take the journey across the mountains until we have some warm weather, and I think by that time we shall have to be going to Abetone. . . .”

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

“Florence,
October 24th, 1883.

Dear Lucy:

I have now to thank you for two most delightful letters and for all that you tell me about *Ida*, and I am thankful that the little story seems likely to be useful. Was it not a great mercy that I should have been chosen to know that dear girl and to preserve the remembrance of her short, beautiful life! You shall have a copy of it soon now. I want you to have an English copy because I think that in the American version the picture lost a good deal, though otherwise it is very satisfactory. As nearly as I can understand, some part of the book of *The Roadside Songs* is to be printed in numbers, but I do not know how much, nor when it is to ap-

pear. Now about ourselves, the principal thing that has happened is that we have concluded to settle definitely in the Locanda Bonciani, where you last saw us. We have been here now fourteen years, and the Bonciani family have been always very kind and good to us, and as we like to spend a good deal of the year at Venice or Abetone, or visiting our friends, it is difficult for us to have a house and servants of our own. Mamma seems pleased to settle, though at first the definite giving up of America made her sad. This was a great sacrifice which she made for me, and yet I never tried to persuade her to it. But she cared more for my health and happiness than for anything or everything else.

Now she seems to enjoy the care of arranging our little home and I think she would like to have our pictures and other things about her, and besides this, I need not tell you that she enjoys all the good fortune that has come to me. Indeed, as far as the *honor* of it goes, she cares a good deal more about it than I do, though I am thankful, more thankful than I can tell you, to know that the work of my life is not wasted. Meanwhile, I continue to have the strangest experience. Ever since Mr. Ruskin (who has been a great deal too good to me in every way) paid me the excessive and, I thought, extravagant honor of bringing me into his Oxford lecture, all his followers who, as you know, constitute almost a religious sect among the English, come to see me

as one of the sights of Florence! I think if you should see my comical state of embarrassment sometimes, you would feel a certain pity for your commonplace old friend thus suddenly set up on a pedestal.

The other day a very beautiful young English girl came to my room with one or two friends. As I gave her my hand, she bowed almost to the ground, just touching the tips of my fingers, as if they were red-hot. And when I spoke to her, she made no answer and only dropped her head and blushed crimson. I thought the poor young thing was deaf and dumb, but found that she had been told *not to speak* in my overpowering presence. I cannot tell you how grateful I felt to you for what you said in your letter, that you knew I was just what I always had been, for many people treat me as if I had grown into something else, which does very well to laugh at, but is rather distressing in reality.

Last summer they had a Garibaldi celebration in the piazza with a grand procession and banners, and bands of music playing the *Inno di Garibaldi*, and as it was a very imposing sight I went out on the balcony to look at it. While I was there, a number of rough-looking men in red neckties walked out on the balcony by my side and one, a thin, wild-looking man with long hair, waved his hand to the multitude and commenced a speech. Dear Lucy, the balcony was narrow, and the Garibaldian deputation, for

such it was, stood between me and the door. I could not come back into the house and there I had to stand. I leave you to imagine my situation. Finally, when all was over, the orator, (who apparently mistook my distress for emotion caused by his eloquence) as he turned to depart, took my hand and pressed it with much feeling, then, to my unspeakable relief, took himself off.

I have lately had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Perkins, who is now staying with Miss Greenough in her old home at Bellosguardo. She is just going to Athens, where she will pass the winter. I have hardly left room to send love to your dear Aunt Rebecca, and from Mamma to you both, and sign myself always

Your affectionate friend,

Fanny.”

CHAPTER VIII

OUR AUNT AND HER BOOKS

WHEN our aunt was in Florence she had an almost constant succession of visitors of many nationalities, who were attracted to her by her charm and fascination. Even when she was between ninety and one hundred, she had kept her vivacity, and in her voice there was something almost sparkling which one usually associates only with youth. Mr. Ruskin writes to Francesca after his recovery from an illness:

“But the Mammina does not yet know the feeling of not being able to do the things she used to. She has in her yet the exhilaration of youth.”

One secret of her charm was her sympathy with all who came to her,—a sympathy absolutely sincere and without one thought of herself, rejoicing in others' good fortune and happiness, and ever ready to help all those who came to her in trouble. We have often wondered how Aunt Lucia, with her limited income, could ever have done the countless kindnesses which she did for others. Not only was she interested in Francesca's poor contadini and in trying to save her from every care and annoyance which might interfere with her work, but there were also many in America whom she was interested in helping.

A friend told us how, when he went one Thanksgiving Day to call upon two old ladies, he found them sitting in their little parlor with Aunt Lucia's photograph in a chair between them, and drinking her

health, for it was her generosity that had given them such a happy Thanksgiving. Aunt Lucia and Francesca were so charitable that they acquired the name of having great wealth. It was said that they had millions, whereas our aunt never possessed even a third of a million, and in order to give so generously to others, must often have gone without some little luxury herself.

With children, Aunt Lucia had boundless patience and a great gift of entertaining them. One of the griefs of her life was the death of a beautiful little boy, one of the children of Countess Pasolini. He died of diphtheria in Florence, and to the very last his love for our aunt was most touching. He would not be parted from a little handkerchief of hers. He would hold it against his face, and it was clasped in his hand when he died.

Aunt Lucia was a most unselfish and devoted wife and mother, but she had very decided opinions which our uncle and Francesca, in their almost adoring love and admiration for her, accepted as quite infallible. If Francesca always kept her sunny nature, I believe it was partly because she was always spoken to with affection and never from her father or her mother heard sharp or fault-finding words. The Alexander family life was a very happy one.

Aunt Lucia's book, *Il Libro d'Oro*, was published when she was over ninety years of age. The following notice was sent to us:

"According to the *New York Times*, Mrs. Francis Alexander, the friend of Ruskin and the mother of Miss Francesca Alexander, artist and author, is the oldest among American women who write books, for she is now ninety-four years of age. Almost sixty years ago, her husband, a Boston portrait painter, took her and their daughter to Florence and there they have made not only a home for themselves but a special place in the hearts of the Florentines who love them,



A LITTLE ITALIAN FRIEND

From a sketch by Francesca Alexander

honor them, confide in them, and relate to them the folk tales which the daughter illustrates so exquisitely. In them Ruskin found not only friends but guides to the religious peace lost long before. And he introduced the daughter's work to the English art lovers and readers. But not until after his death did Mrs. Alexander send to an American publisher her *Il Libro d'Oro*, a collection of legends of saints and saintly deeds.

"The manuscript, written in a large almost absolutely uniform hand, and filling a rather thick square quarto, might have been reproduced in facsimile and yet have been as legible as it now is in type, and no single sign of age was to be found in it or in the accompanying letter. The translation was as idiomatic as if the writer had heard nothing but English all her long life. And yet when Messrs. Little Brown & Company issued the book in 1905, she was ninety years of age. She is, or was, when her latest letters were received, still active and happy, still continuing her friendly association with her neighbors, still writing occasionally,—an admirable example of lovely and serene old age."

Remarkable as this was, our aunt's autograph books seem to us even more remarkable. She called them her scrap-books. Of these there are sixteen. They are very large, heavy volumes, handsomely bound in calf. Aunt Lucia sometimes said that she intended to make no more of them, but she was over ninety when she arranged the last two volumes. We inherited six of these scrap-books. Two of them contain nearly two hundred valuable autograph letters. Two of the volumes comprise a collection of letters from Sigismondo Castromediano, Duke of Caballino.

He had been arrested and imprisoned during the Risorgimento, and for eleven years was fastened by ball and chain to Poërio, the celebrated Neapolitan patriot. From the time when she first went to Italy, our aunt was much interested in having them liber-

ated, but at that time she did not know the influential Italians whom she knew later, and could do but little. Gladstone tried to influence the Italian Government to have them liberated, but was unsuccessful.

Finally, after eleven years in prison, they escaped and fled to England, where they were fêted and acclaimed as heroes and martyrs. Later, when the Duke of Caballino was allowed to return to Italy, he was almost blind, owing to his long imprisonment. Aunt Lucia procured for him from a Boston oculist a prescription which greatly helped his eyes. In gratitude for all the interest she had taken in him, the Duke of Caballino sent her a carved chest filled with valuable Etruscan pottery. Paul Bourget, in his *Sensation d'Italie*, has devoted a very interesting chapter to an account of his visit to the Duke of Caballino in his ruined castle on his estate at Lecce. During his imprisonment the castle was sacked and his property much injured. Paul Bourget writes his name *Cavalino*, but in Italy it is *Caballino*.

There are one hundred and seventy of his letters to our aunt. These are in two volumes. As he was nearly blind, the letters are almost illegible but on each opposite page are copies of them written in a clear hand by an Italian secretary.

One of the books is called "Francesca." Many of the letters are about "The Story of Ida." If Francesca's head *could* have been turned, it would have been after "The Story of Ida" was published. Noted authors wrote about it. Clergymen preached sermons on it. Bishop Potter took it for his subject in a sermon he preached in Florence. Of these letters there are one hundred, of which a few are included here.

The following letter from Cardinal Manning was given to Francesca by Mr. Ruskin:

“Archbishop’s House,
Westminster, S. W.,
May 28, 1883.

My dear Mr. Ruskin:

I have waited in the hope of thanking you in words for *The Story of Ida*. It is simply beautiful, like the *Fioretti di S. Francesco*. Such flowers can grow in one soil alone. They can be found only in the garden of faith over which the world of light hangs visibly and is more intensely seen by the poor and the pure in heart, than by the rich, or the learned, or the men of culture.

The Story of Ida has already given joy to one who has been suffering greatly. I hope you are again in London and will come as usual.

Believe me, always,

Yours affectionately,

H. E., Card: Archbp.”

To our aunt from Oliver Wendell Holmes:

“Beverly Farms, Mass.
August 3rd, 1884.

My dear Mrs. Alexander:

Amelia reached home on the 26th of July, a week ago yesterday, well and anticipating a joyous meeting. Her oldest brother met her on the wharf and had to tell her of the death of Edward, the youngest of our three children. It was a sad greeting, and she found us, of course, deeply sorrowing, yet greatly comforted to get

her back with us. Edward was as well as usual on the 16th, the day when she sailed. But on the evening of the 18th he complained of difficulty of breathing, and after getting relief to some extent, seemed to be quiet. But in the morning he was found lifeless, lying as if just asleep in the position in which he was left.

He was a general favorite and is a great loss to us all.

Amelia did not forget her messages from you, and I received the package containing the very interesting relics which you have so kindly sent me. The little box made from the wood of the *Constitution*—‘Old Ironsides’—is a precious heirloom. A good many school children have spouted my ‘Ay, tear the tattered ensign down,’ and I have sometimes had the credit of saving the old ship when it was proposed to take her to pieces.

Amelia (Mrs. Sargent) is very well and full of manifold experiences. She tells me that you were very kind to her, shows me *The Story of Ida*, which is infinitely touching and ought to go into the *Acta Sanctorum*. What almost divine loveliness in that little portrait! I have not yet seen the large one which is as yet in Boston.

With Amelia’s love and our warmest thanks for your kind attention to her, I am, dear Mrs. Alexander,

Faithfully yours,

Oliver Wendell Holmes.”

The two following letters to Francesca are from Mr. Thomas G. Appleton:

“Nahant,
August 10th, 1877.

Dear Miss Alexander:

I visited with a party of friends today Mrs. Agassiz, and in the name of all of us I cannot resist the pleasure of telling you how much we are delighted with Mrs. Shaw's exquisite book.

You have made the pen mightier than the burin and make us to not miss color at all either. The book breathes of Florence and Italian life, and I am proud to have such a countrywoman.

When I remember the little girl sitting on your father's doorstep so many years ago, I can hardly believe you have grown to do such fine things. How proud your parents must be of you, as indeed we all are, and a famous poet has praised you in verse which I hope you have seen—Mr. Lowell.

He has gone to Spain as ambassador, but before he returns, I daresay will manage to pay you a visit in Florence. Does your father ever paint now? Every now and then one of his strong works comes to the surface, and his old friends rejoice at the admiration it excites. Kind remembrances to your parents.

Very truly yours,
T. G. Appleton.”

“Nahant,
July 24, 1883.

Dear Miss Alexander:

The beautiful book, with its enchanting frontispiece, came to me today and though I have only glanced through it, I do not delay a moment to return you my thanks. I had heard of your romantic and flattering adventures with Mr. Ruskin from Una Felton, and I had been so delighted, as you may remember, by Mrs. Shaw's book, that I was thoroughly glad that you were good enough to send me this little memoir. I have lived enough in Italy to love the gracious, friendly nature of the nice Italians. I do not forget at Rome my landlady's daughter, with her gentle '*E' permesso?*' as she came to see me. And you know the Florentine peasantry, about which I have always heard such compliments; their self-respect, dignity, and beautiful language.

Remember me most kindly to your mother. Is Boston never again to welcome either of you? You know how cordial it would be, and how proud we are that you have won a sacred place in the opinions of the best, and how glad we should be to acknowledge it.

Yours sincerely,
T. G. Appleton.”

To Francesca from John G. Whittier:

“Oak Knoll, Danvers, Mass.
8th Mo. 21, 1883.

My dear Friend:

How shall I thank thee for the beautiful *Story of Ida!* By some mistake the volume intended for me was given to Mr. C. A. Whittier of Boston, but before I received thy letter I had read the sweet and tender story under the pines by the Asquam Lake on a lovely Sabbath morning, the holy serenity of which seemed in entire sympathy with the young girl's ‘peace that passeth understanding.’ The book will, I verily think, do more good than all the volumes of theological controversy and speculation which have appeared for half a century. Everybody is reading it, and it will be reaching and melting human hearts long after the writer shall have joined her beloved young friend. I enclose a little sonnet written after reading it.

I suppose thee and thy dear Mother are still in the mountains but I send this to your address in the city. I owe thy Mother a letter but I cannot write much in the great heat which is now upon us, and indeed I cannot write at any time without suffering. I am overwhelmed daily with letters from strangers and find it quite impossible to answer them all. I hear, of course, of thy wonderful book and of its purchase by John Ruskin and of its reception in England. I en-

joyed the privilege of seeing the one sent to this country some years ago, by the favor of dear Annie Field, at whose home it was for a day or two. How glad I am that in thy case the rare gift of genius is consecrated to the glory of Him who gave it and to the welfare of His children.

Give my best love to thy good Mother. I wish I could see you both once more, but I hold you in daily remembrance. Last winter I spent in your old quarters at the Winthrop House and constantly recalled you. I was there to be near my sick brother, the last of our family, who passed away in January, leaving me alone. But God has given me dear friends and many blessings, more than I deserve.

I am very gratefully thy friend,

John G. Whittier."

THE "STORY OF IDA "

Weary of jangling voices never stilled,
 The sceptic's sneer, the bigot's hate, the din
 Of clashing texts, the webs of creed men spin
 Round simple truth, the children grown who build
 With gilded cards their New Jerusalem,
 Draping the awful mystery of the soul
 With sacerdotal tailoring, alb and stole,
 I turn, with glad and grateful heart, from them
 To the sweet story of the Florentine
 Immortal in her blameless maidenhood,
 Beautiful as God's angels and as good:
 Feeling that life, even now, may be divine
 With love no wrong can ever change to hate,
 Nor sin make less than all-compassionate!

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

From Mr. Robert Sewell to Miss Lilly Cleveland:

“Oxford,
December, 1884.

Dr. Acland dined at the Wardens' on Thursday night, and sat next to me. We got into conversation about various things and I asked him whether he could tell me where Miss Alexander's pictures were, that I might go and see them. He said that Ruskin was in Oxford and he would give me a letter to him, since he and the Doctor were old friends of thirty years' standing. I demurred on the ground of intruding, but Dr. A. insisted warmly and kindly, and I could not refuse. On Friday morning came Dr. A's letter to me, enclosing one to Ruskin. Kindness personified was his to me.

I went at eleven to Mr. Ruskin's house, was shown into a dining-room, sent up Dr. A's letter, and waited. A moment, and he came in! Imagine my feelings. I began talking of Dr. A. and his kindness, then of you and Miss Alexander.

He was as nice as possible, so gentle and winning in his ways, and presently asked if I would like to see Miss Alexander's drawings. Of course I expressed my desire to do so, and he took me upstairs to his bedroom and set me down, with a chair facing me, on which to show me the sheets.

And then he began, 'The portrait in Ida

is charming, but I am going to show you, to begin with, a picture which embodies all her style in its highest characteristics.'

He had four, altogether, that I saw at his house, and at the art schools attached to the Taylor Institution, I saw ten sheets fully framed and set up, and twenty-five carefully mounted and placed in a cabinet. At the first sight of a most lovely $\frac{3}{4}$ -length of a Tuscan peasant woman, with a most exquisitely finished distance and foreground, which was the first picture Mr. Ruskin showed me, I fairly gasped. I said, 'Is *that* the original pen-and-ink? It looks like a steel engraving.' He replied, 'I thought it would take your breath away!'

And then he began upon them. I cannot tell you all he said. I have not the time, and I could not remember all his own words, but all he said centered round this criticism: 'Perfect expression of perfect feelings! The highest emotion mankind is capable of expressed with the highest art!'

He showed me the four he had in his own room and pointed out all their beauties and then went downstairs and wrote a letter for me to the curator of the art schools, desiring him to show me all that there were in Oxford.

I went there this morning with Miss Blachford and Violet, and we saw them all most carefully. While we were looking at them, Mr. Ruskin himself came and stood behind us and

talked, picture by picture, of their wonderful beauty and the lessons they teach. Dr. Acland too looked in on us. Altogether, we had a rare treat that I shall never forget. Ruskin is quite eaten up with enthusiasm about the pictures, and seems never to tire of talking of them. I never met with more kindness."

Extracts of a letter from Miss Lilly Cleveland to Francesca:

"I have my set of the dear *Roadside Songs* complete. We gave a set to Uncle George. He is perfectly delighted with them and I enclose his postal card to show you what he did with the St. Christopher. . . .

Lilly C."

One of Miss Lilly Cleveland's uncles was Bishop Doane of the Protestant Episcopal Church. His brother was G. W. Doane, Catholic Vicar-General of New Jersey, who wrote the following:

"I read the legend of St. Christopher, Edwige's comments and all, out loud in the church this morning at the High Mass, with a very few prefatory remarks!

G. W. D.

Newark, November 15th, 1885."

To our aunt from Mr. Ruskin's cousin, Mrs. Arthur
Severn:

“Brantwood,
The 28th of March, 1887.

Beloved *Mamma*:

On the other side you will find part of a letter from, and part of a letter to, Oliver Wendell Holmes, which your Figlio read to me today, and I asked leave to copy the same, which was readily granted; for I feel sure you will be pleased and amused with what is said on both sides! I'm having such a lovely time here, and am ever your devoted and grateful

Figlia.”

Copy of part of a letter from Oliver Wendell Holmes
to John Ruskin:

“Boston,
March 3rd, 1887.

. . . My visit to England was full of delight and there was little to regret except the failure of our intended visit to you. You have been greatly called to my remembrance by my receiving *The Peace of Polissena* from our old friend Francesca. We had *The Story of Ida* before, and read it (as everybody did who had any sense of what is beautiful in the divine side of human nature) with intense interest.

This new and more cheerful story brings a ray of Italian sunshine into our Northern home.

Francesca is, as you know, one of our Boston products or educts, softened and sweetened by Southern influences. The relations you have formed and maintained with Francesca have drawn a great deal of attention to her, naturally first for your own sake and then for her own."

Part of Ruskin's letter in answer to Oliver Wendell Holmes':

" . . . But I am especially glad of the occasion of your letter in *The Peace of Polissena*, for truly I think there will be prettier pictures of Francesca herself in the book of *Folks*¹ as it goes on than have been given of her yet.

I like your claiming her for a Boston product or educt!

She is a lovely Florentine Christian who has had the sense to fly from that city of Destruction in which it was ordained that she should be born—that she might be thus rescued."

Extracts from the Dowager Countess of Dalhousie's letters:

"Nov. 6th, 1882.

" . . . Thanks for telling me the story of Ruskin and Miss Alexander—it is so delightful! I am glad he is the purchaser of her great book so that now her fame will be *sounded* as it ought, and she might be the founder of a school, like Giotto! I should call her the 'Gentile Fabriano'

¹ *Christ's Folk in the Apennine.*

of today. . . . How I should like to see that last of Miss Alexander's, of our Saviour speaking to the *Samaritana*! My only and difficult chance will be by making acquaintance some day with Ruskin and gaining his good will. . . ."

In Villa Serbelloni at Bellagio on Lake Como we met the delightful Scotch author, Mr. Samuel Crockett, and his charming wife. When he heard we were on our way to Florence, he asked us to tell our cousin that he had just been visiting Mr. Ruskin and that he was much better, and then he said, "Will you take a message to your cousin from me? Will you tell her how beloved her *Story of Ida* is in Scotland? And a handsomely bound copy of it was the first present I gave my wife after we were engaged."

My sister and I spent many seasons in Florence, that is, the springs and autumns. When the cold winds began to sweep down the Arno late in the autumn, we went to the Riviera or to Naples for the winter, returning to Florence early in the spring. We were in Florence at the time of the great earthquake, which did much damage. The walls of the Foundling Hospital were cracked open. The cross on the church of Santa Maria Novella was bent over. Every public carriage in Florence was taken, for many Florentines would not stay in the houses and spent the night in public carriages. When we went to see Aunt Lucia the next day, she said that Florence would never seem the same again. The first time that we left Florence for Venice, we received this note from Francesca, and one of the luncheon baskets which the Alexanders sometimes sent to friends who were leaving Florence:

"Dear May:

I am sending you a few little things for your supper in the cars. I could not go out, and

this was the best bundle I could make up in the house. You will excuse the want of nice paper, ribbon, and so forth. There is also a cushion for our dear Lucia to use on the journey, and I hope she will keep on using it until it wears out. Good-bye, and God bless you both and give you a happy journey. Much love from Mamma, and from

Your affectionate cousin,
Fanny.

Edwige says she will pray for you this evening that the journey may go well, and you know that we shall do the same."

The following letter is from Miss Susie Beever, one of the two sisters who were such dear old friends of Mr. Ruskin. The little book, *Hortus Inclusus*, is a collection of some of his charming letters to them. The Misses Beever would not accept any proceeds from the sale of the book. Neither would Mr. Ruskin, who said that the letters were theirs and belonged to them. But they insisted that the letters were his, as he had written them. Finally, they all agreed to send the money to Francesca for her poor people.

"Coniston, Ambleside,
May 21st, 1884.

My dear Mrs. Alexander:

Will you forgive me for so long delaying to thank you for your letter, so full of kindness and sympathy. I am truly sorry to have seemed so ungrateful, and you have had deep sorrow, so you know how to feel for me! I hope dear Miss Alexander is well, very busy as usual, no doubt.

Mr. Ruskin has given me the first number of *Wayside Songs*. What a beautiful book it will be! I think it will have a very large circulation.

Our weather is still cool. For the first time this year I went into the garden for a short time yesterday. All looked so lovely. The sweet narcissus is in flower, and many other pretty things.

Our dear friend Mr. Ruskin came to see me on Saturday. I think I never knew him looking better, with a nice, quiet cheerfulness. He had rowed himself across the lake in his safe boat, 'The Jumpy Jenny.' The water was rough, but the wind in his favor. Will you give my love to dear Anna Lloyd? This is a poor little note, but my eyes still have a strong objection to writing. With love to dear Miss Alexander and yourself, believe me

Yours affectionately and gratefully,

S. Beever."

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

"Abetone,

August 13th, 1887.

Dear Lucy:

Did I ever answer your last letter? After the losses of the winter and spring, I was not good for much for a long time. I wrote you, did I not? how I lost Enrichetta Nerli in April. My life is now sadly changed, for nearly all those friends who were so dear to me are gone—Mari-

anna, Gigina, Angelina, Enrichetta—all within so short a time. Marina and Sylvia I can see for only a short part of the year, and of all the old circle of friends once so united I have only Giannina now left in Florence. She and I cling much together, as you may imagine. And now I have written you quite enough about my troubles.

The *feste* at Florence for the completion of the *Duomo* were very grand, but of course I did not see much of them, only what one could not help seeing walking about the streets. For I went nowhere. But the *Piazza del Duomo* all dressed with flowers was one of the loveliest sights that ever I saw. The new front of the *Duomo* is beautiful and is as nearly worthy of the rest as anything made in this century can be. Some of the statues are very fine, and altogether I think it the grandest modern work that ever I saw. It was to me very touching to walk about Florence in those days, for the people, after all, are the descendants of those who built the *Duomo* and made the city so beautiful. And they have not lost all their greatness of nature—for once, possibly for the last time, the old spirit blazed up. The completion of the old church was a thing that went to everybody's heart. Even the hotel servants asked leave to bring down the plants from my terrace and arrange them about the door, that Albergo Bonciani might also be decorated in honor of the Madonna del Fiore.

Great families hung out their family banners,

and the banners of many families long since dead, who in their time did much for Florence, were hung from the palaces where they had once lived. Shopkeepers hung out the ancient banners of their respective trades.

Good-bye, and give my love to all the friends who remember me, especially dear Rose, whom I can never forget, and receive an *abbraccio di cuore* from

Your ever affectionate
Fanny.”

From our aunt to our mother:

“Bassano,
October 27th, 1888.

Dear Mary:

Many thanks for your letter. I am glad to know you are all well and safely home again. We, too, are expecting to go home in a few days, if indeed a few rooms in a hotel deserve the name, and at least I shall be glad to be quiet and settled for a little while. The autumn has been beautiful here, just a little snow on the tops of the mountains, and mild, sunny days. The air has been so clear that the other morning, just as the sun rose, Fan saw plainly a mountain near Trieste, 170 miles away. I have been trying to write before, but when we are making a visit my time is not my own and lately has been less so than usual, for Mr. Ruskin, who has been in

Switzerland, was coming into Italy to see us, and Marina was good enough to invite him here, and he came and stayed nine days, and there was always something going on: long excursions in the daytime, and often company, and always music in the evenings. The family did not seem pleased if I did not join them, so I am behind-hand with everything, and only hope I shall not be hurried about the packing. . . .”

Francesca to Miss Lucy Woodbridge:

“Florence,
December, 1888.

Dear Lucy:

I cannot remember when I last wrote you, nor whether I answered the last but one of your letters.

I have a great deal to be thankful for in my life—*everything* in my own home, for the ‘*Mamma*’ is wonderfully well, though I feared much the effect upon her of losing her life-long friend, Margaret Tucker. It seems as if she and I were destined to see the departure of nearly all those whom we love, and the effect of it is to draw us almost too close together. I shudder sometimes when I think that, however long delayed, the parting day must come even for us and then—may the Lord help the one who shall be left behind! But ‘sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!’

Now I must tell you something of what has

happened to us. I think that I wrote you from Cortina, where we spent the summer in a very beautiful and singular country which, if I am not mistaken, I described to you so minutely that I will not now begin again. Then we went to Bassano to our dear friends, (who spoil me in the most unprincipled manner) and while there we had an unexpected pleasure in a visit from Mr. Ruskin who, being in Switzerland, came down to Italy on purpose to see us. When Marina heard that he was coming, she very kindly invited him to her house, where he stayed for nine days and made himself as pleasant as possible, winning the hearts of all the Bassano people by his kind ways. He struck me as looking better in health than when I last saw him.

Dear Lucy, what must you have been thinking of me! I began this letter last spring, and left writing it in consequence of the growing trouble about my eyes. There seems to have been a blessing on this year, for Mamma has improved very greatly in health, and if you should see her you would say that she has grown younger and not older. So I feel as if I ought to be giving thanks all the time instead of complaining.

But I know you want me to finish what I was saying about Mr. Ruskin. He could not have been kinder and pleasanter than he was. His greatest pleasure was in listening to Silvia's very beautiful music, and she was extremely kind and passed all her evenings in playing to

him. The children attached themselves to him in a wonderful way and little Bebo, in the evenings when the music was going on, would nestle up to his side, lay his head against his shoulder, and go comfortably to sleep. When he went away, he gave Edwige a letter directed '*All' Edwige nostra,*' which she gave me to open and read to her. It contained fifty francs with a few very kind words. But it was a sad parting for me, for the feeling was strong in my mind that we should not meet again, and oh, Lucy, how good he has been to me all these years! He could not have been any kinder to me if I had been his daughter, or sister, as he always used to call me. He is pretty well now, but feeble, and not as I could wish to see him.

Now, as for what we have been doing for the last year, I have little enough to tell you. Last spring Mamma was not well and grew thin, and it was a very anxious time for me. But we went to Venice about the first of June, where she immediately began to mend in quite a miraculous way; and this winter she is stronger and better than for several years past.

From Venice we went to a pretty little old town among the Dolomites, Primiero, a really lovely place, but so inaccessible that I do not think we shall go there again. Then in the autumn to Bassano, as usual, where we spent nearly two months, and then came home and settled down for the winter. I was not so happy

this year in Bassano as in times past, owing to the fact that my dear Pierino was studying to pass an examination, a thing which I greatly dislike and disapprove of. My attention has been called lately to the present cruel and most inefficient system of schools here in Italy, where a race of pale, sharp, cigar-smoking, spectacled young people is growing up, as different as possible from the beautiful and vigorous young Italians of thirty years ago. Now Lucy, dear, I suppose I must leave you, for if I go on I shall be interrupted again and no one knows then when the letter will be finished. Good-bye, it is growing dark. Mamma sends you much love, and I am always

Your loving old friend,

Fanny."

"Florence,

November 23rd, 1893.

Dearest Lucy:

I cannot tell you with how much pleasure I received your long, affectionate, and most delightful letter. This summer passed with us much as usual. We went first to Venice in June and passed the month there. I always enjoy that month in Venice. It is less spoiled by modern improvements than other Italian towns. I sometimes think that S. Francesco, who once lived on an island near there, has left his beloved *Madonna povereta* to look after the city. And she

takes good care of it. If ever the Venetians should grow rich, the first thing they would do would be to spoil and disfigure their beautiful city and turn it into a poor imitation of Paris.

Then in Venice for one month I keep house, which I like very much, in a very splendid old palace with its front adorned with porphyry and *verde antico*, and with a pretty garden like some of those in the Bible—full of roses and cypress, pomegranates, vines, and fig trees. But I am afraid that an American housekeeper would be rather horrified at the sight of my kitchen, though it has certainly a fine view of the Grand Canal, for there is not even a chimney, but only a hole in the wall where a portion of the smoke goes out and where also the cat comes in. But we find ourselves quite happy with the dilapidated magnificences and small inconveniences of our abode, which at least has not the fault of any close connection with the present century. When you write, do tell me something of dear Rose Hooper. Only the other day, among some of my treasures, I found one of her golden baby curls which I have kept ever since I was a child myself.

Good-bye, dear Lucy; I do not ask you not to forget me, because I know you never will, but do write to me soon. Meanwhile, I am always

Your loving old friend,

Fanny Alexander.”

Miss Sarah Orne Jewett to our aunt:

“South Berwick, Me.,
Jan. 22nd, 1902.

My dear Cousin:

I think that I have put off writing to you only because I wished so much to have ‘a good talk.’ The chapter keeps growing, of things that I wished to tell you. This letter *must* make a beginning! In the first place, I am sending you a copy of a story I have long been writing. I have had a dream of keeping some of the old people and old stories of this dear town in remembrance, and you will find the story beginning at Hamilton House—your grandmother’s house—and, I hope, like it the better! I put it into Colonel Hamilton’s earlier unmarried years. How I should have liked to run to you with questions while I was writing the story, and how I should fairly love to talk it over with you now. You will like to hear that some friends of ours—Bostonians of these later days—have put Hamilton House back into something like its former splendor. They live here from April to November and are very dear friends indeed,—Mrs. George Tyson and her daughter, and they keep a photograph of your grandmother’s portrait (which Aunt Mary Bell got for them from Lucia Swett) on the drawing-room mantelpiece.

I have made a delightful visit to dear Aunt Mary Long—your ‘Mary Olivia’—and you can’t

think how eagerly she asked me all sorts of affectionate things about you and begged me to give you her dearest love and to say with what pleasure she clung to the remembrance of your early friendship. She was never dearer nor sweeter. We are fortunate (aren't we?) who used to hear Aunt Mary sing the old Scottish and English songs. The house looks just as it always has since I can first remember it, and the high teas are *just as good!!* Sometimes when I find your old friends' hearts so warm with remembrance, and how much they wish for you, I wish I had made you into a nice tidy bundle with white paper and a pretty string, and brought you right home with me. I saw Ida Mason the other day; I see her and Ellen often when I am staying in town with Mrs. Fields.

I mean to go to Jamaica Plain to see how the Swetts are, just as soon as I possibly can, and then I shall write to you again. I keep your silver pencil close at hand and your coin pin, and I keep many loving thoughts of you in my heart. Dear friends! Dear Mrs. Alexander and dear Francesca! I love you and kiss you both, in my thoughts, and wish myself back in that dear corner of your drawing-room which I remember so often. May God bless you and keep you, and please do not forget me.

Yours most affectionately,

Sarah O. Jewett."

Francesca's friend, Miss Lucy Woodbridge, married late in life a widower, Mr. Selden. Consequently, after 1903 Francesca's letters to her are addressed to "Mrs. Selden."

"Florence, 21 Piazza S. Maria Novella,
February 12th, 1903.

Dearest Lucy:

Over and over again during these years that have gone by I have begun letters to you which I have never finished. So now you will be wanting to hear something about us. First of all, I have the greatest of all earthly blessings in Mamma's continued good health. She is really wonderful, looks no older than I, and has kept her sight and hearing unimpaired and (what is more than all) her youthful spirits, and the full strength of her mind. She makes everybody's wants and troubles her own and is a blessing to all about her, and she will reach her ninetieth year next spring. May the Lord keep her long! She takes long walks every day and in all weathers, leads a life the reverse of self-indulgent, and does no end of work, and bears everybody's burdens. So the best is left to me still. For the rest, I have lost nearly all my friends. The death of my Edwige, faithful friend and companion of forty years, was a heavy blow and has much changed my life. Marina is much aged now and makes me anxious, and her daughter Silvia has never recovered from the death of her last son Pierino, who was an angel on earth

and far too good for this world. She makes the best of a sad and desolate life.

One other trouble of mine will perhaps make you smile, but it is very real to me—the defacement, modernization, and vulgarization of my beautiful Florence, which I have loved more than it is safe to love anything in this world, and which is now the victim of civilization and progress. But I will not write more or I shall *never* end. Good-bye. Mamma sends dear love. Please remember me kindly and respectfully to your husband. And you, dear Lucy, try to keep your patience with your rather unsatisfactory but most loving old friend,

Fanny Alexander.”

Our aunt to our sister, Mrs. C. H. Vinton:

“Florence, Italy,
February 21st, 1906.

Dearest Lily:

I have so much to thank you for that I hardly know where to begin. First, for your charming letter. I am thankful that you are, as I suppose, safe and well in Florida, and I hope that hereafter you will always leave Boston for the South before November at the latest. We thank you very much for the beautiful cards, and most of all for the priceless treasure of the copy of the love letter. I am afraid the lady trifled a little with the honest heart. I wonder

if he had her in his mind when he wrote, 'For of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, "It might have been." ' Dear love from us both to you both.

Your loving
Aunt L. A."

The letter to which Aunt Lucia refers was given to our sister, Mrs. Vinton, by her friend Mrs. Laurin Martin. Mr. Whittier's early love, to whom he wrote the letter, was an aunt of Mrs. Martin and of the Reverend Henry Hovey, who was so long rector of St. John's Church in Portsmouth, N. H. Aunt Lucia once, in writing to Mr. Whittier, mentioned an article she had read in some paper which seemed to refer to his devotion to Miss Mary Emerson Smith. Mr. Whittier, in his answer to our aunt's letter, said, "Yes, it did rather squint that way."

Aunt Lucia was delighted to have this copy of Mr. Whittier's love letter, which we have permission to publish here:

John Greenleaf Whittier to Miss Mary Emerson Smith:

"Boston, 23d, 5th month, 1829.

Miss Smith:

This is not the first time I have attempted to write you. I have written and rewritten and as often destroyed my fruitless efforts. Why, you will ask me, was this? Simply because I was afraid you had ceased to be the good kind-hearted girl, the generous friend and confidant which you once were. I have always esteemed you highly; fondly perhaps; but let that pass,

you have forgotten 'Auld Lang Syne,' and why should I be foolish enough to cherish an idle dream of my boyhood, a yearning for that confidence and friendship which I fear has no existence in real life. No! I have shaken off every feeling of a tender nature, and I would ask nothing more than the friendship of the cold-hearted world. Can you deny me this? Enough of sentimentality, I have done with it.

The blessed hopes I have cherished have gone; all gone; and memory treasures up with a miserly fondness the bright things of the past. Do you suppose you are not included among them? Depend upon it you are among the foremost.

But why do I say this? Why do I write this? The very absurdity of the thing has hitherto prevented me from seeking your correspondence, much as I have desired it. I know very well that you will consider my proposal as a wild one, but do remember that in complying with it, you are conferring a great favor on your petitioner.

They say, and I listen to it with a mingled feeling of pleasure and pain, that your hand has been plighted to another; to a worthy and deserving gentleman. God grant that happiness may attend you both, but it is idle, perfectly so, for those who know so much of each other as we do, to affect to misunderstand each other. Mary!

I have loved you passionately; deeply; and you, if there is any faith in woman's words, you have not *hated* me.

Do you remember that last walk we had on the banks of the Merrimac when the moon was looking down upon us? Ay! and on a hundred others. They are living in *my* memory, every clasp of the hand, every look of kindness is remembered, cherished. I hate, from the bottom of my heart, coldness and insensibility. An iceberg glittering in the moonlight may be beautiful in perspective, but knowing its frozen slumber, would one wish to approach it? The lake, dark and silent and waveless, may lull the wind into a pleasant tranquillity, but it will not rouse up the heart's torrent in the delirium of joy, as it does when the wind and the sunshine are playing on its bosom.

I need not repeat that I value your friendship, admire your disposition, and love you as a brother should love his sister; you know all this; you have known my devotion and such, too, as none other will ever exact of me; you are the beau ideal of my imagination, and yet I ask nothing of you but your friendship, nothing more. Whatever may be our situation in life, in weal or woe, nothing shall interrupt it on my part, and from what I know of you I am sure that you will not forget an old friend. Do I ask anything extravagant? anything which you cannot comply with? God forbid that any request

of mine should disturb you, but I could wish you to write me often and frankly, just as you would write to any of your associates. You will be a good girl in this, as you have been in everything, won't you?

Did you receive the last *Manufacturer*? The article entitled 'Sappho' was written after visiting the Athenæum Gallery of Paintings in this city. The painting of Sappho is beautiful, for it resembles you. I wish you were here. I have become somewhat acquainted here in Boston, principally with our modern literati; I have a thousand things to say to you, but not until I hear from you and glance my eyes over the well-known characters of your handwriting. I will tell you about the fashions; everything and anything you wish to hear of.

Your sincere friend,
John G. Whittier."

Whittier's poems, "My Playmate," "Memories," and "The First Flowers" referred to Miss Mary Emerson Smith. She married Judge Thomas of Kentucky. During the Civil War, General Morgan and a companion who had escaped with him from the Federal Prison at Columbus, Ohio, went to the Thomas home.

Mrs. Thomas furnished them with horses. Her house was soon surrounded by Federal soldiers, who searched it thoroughly. After General Morgan and his companions had reached a place of safety, they turned the horses loose and these returned to their home on the Thomas estate.

Francesca to Mrs. Selden:

“Florence,
March 5th, 1907.

Dearest Lucy:

I am glad at last to find myself beginning a letter to you, even though not by my own hand. In our own house, we are all well. Mamma in a few weeks will have reached the good age of ninety-three years, and she is still, it seems to me, about as young as ever, going out in all weathers, bearing everybody's burdens, enjoying the company of her friends, and seeing entirely to all the business affairs with a clearness and judgment which we younger people may well envy. . . . I wish that you could see Mamma now! She holds her own so wonderfully! I do not think you would find her very much changed if you were to see her again. She has kept her sight and her hearing and all her old vivacity and brightness, and still thinks for everybody and does for everybody. She has had two hard years with my accident, but she has borne them well. I think I ought to be the most thankful woman in the world. I myself am gradually recovering and begin to walk about the house pretty well with a stick. I am always what I was when we were children, and have been ever since,

Your ever loving friend,
Francesca Alexander.”

CHAPTER IX

OUR LAST VISIT TO OUR AUNT AND FRANCESCA

IN the autumn of 1909, my sister and I went to Madeira intending to spend the winter there, but we decided, after a few weeks on that beautiful island, to take the first steamer to Gibraltar and go from there to Nice by way of Genoa. The first evening at Gibraltar, when we went into the hotel dining-room, we saw, at one of the tables, our cousins, Mrs. Edward Hallowell and Miss Charlotte Hallowell, who had just come from Spain and were on their way to Florence to spend the winter with Aunt Lucia and Francesca. We all went on the same steamer to Genoa, where we separated, our cousins going to Florence, and my sister and I going the next day to Nice, where we passed the winter. Early in the spring we went to Florence.

Aunt Lucia and Francesca had met with serious trouble since we were last in Florence. Francesca had fallen and broken her hip. After this, she had a long illness, and lay for over a year and a half in a state of lethargy, knowing little of what was going on about her. It was a sad time for our aunt, who was then over ninety-three years old. She bore this trial in the same brave spirit in which she always took all trials that came to her, believing them to be the will of her Heavenly Father. All through Francesca's illness, she took care of her, devoting herself to her as if she had been a little child. Her devotion was rewarded, however, for one day Francesca suddenly said, "Mamma, life has come back to me." She firmly believed that her recovery was due to her mother's prayers and to her devoted care. Gradually, Francesca resumed some

of her old interests. She was able to compose verses and to have visits from her poor contadini.

She had the great pleasure that spring of seeing again the old friend of her childhood, Mrs. Selden, (Lucy Woodbridge) who spent some time in Florence.

When we left Florence, Aunt Lucia was ninety-six years old. She felt that she might never see us again, and talked very seriously to us of her great dread of leaving Francesca alone. For herself, with her deep religious faith, she only felt that she was going to rejoin loved friends. As she said to us the last Thanksgiving Day that we spent in Florence, when we found her sitting alone in her room, "I have many friends with me today, but they are not of this world."

The morning we left Florence, we stopped early on our way to the station and left some flowers with Raffaello for Aunt Lucia. She mentions these in the following letter received in Genoa:

"Florence, May 17, 1910.

Dear Lucia:

I was very glad of your letter and that all is well with you. We miss you both very much, but think with much pleasure of your visit. The great rose and the lovely moss roses are still fresh. F. begins to read, and walks with one cane. I have more hope. Our summer is entirely uncertain; my dear mother used to say, 'We must live one day at a time.' We miss your dear selves very much, but then I was terribly afraid you might be ill here, where you could not have American comforts, and now your prospects are very happy, and there never was such devotion as May's for you. Do write when you

can if only a few lines. Dear love to you two from us two.

Your affectionate
Aunt Lucia."

"Florence, Italy, Sept. 22, 1910.
22 Piazza Santa Maria Novella.

Dear May:

Many thanks for your kind letter. I should have thanked you for it long since, but it is not very easy for me to write, and for us both I have a world of writing to do, and none too much eyesight.

Francesca has gained very slowly; it has been a hard experience. Now she can walk about the room with two canes, and her eyes can stand daylight though not sunshine, and she is composing some more poetry. I am sure you will like it. It has been hard for her and for me, but I think of the good woman who in some great affliction told her clergyman, 'I cannot bear it!' and he answered, 'Madam, what do you propose to do?'

The beautiful Madeira embroideries you gave us are among our greatest treasures; they are so exquisite. I often wish you had the same. Please thank dear Lily for her splendid cards and dear letter, only they make me feel rather homesick for the lovely place they represented.

Do write to me. It will, I know, be rather troublesome, for I can read nothing but a rather large *round* hand; a *running* hand I cannot read

at all. I know it needs time and patience, but I ought to be thankful, as I am, to read at all at ninety-six. With dear love to you each and all: Sam, Lucia, Lily, you, and William and Mr. Vinton, from us two.

Yours affectionately,
L. A."

Aunt Lucia died May 19, 1916, and our cousin was left alone. About a year after her death, her trustee wrote to my sister asking if she could go out to Florence, but with our elder brother very ill in a hospital, it was impossible for us to go. Francesca, however, had some kind friends in Florence. Aunt Lucia's dearest friend had always been the friend of her girlhood, Mrs. Tucker (Margaret Chadwick). She was much interested in the children of the Chadwick family.

One of Mrs. Tucker's nephews lived in Florence, Mr. Isadore Braggiotti; he knew Aunt Lucia and Francesca intimately, and during Francesca's last illness, Mr. and Mrs. Braggiotti were most kind and attentive to her, going every day to inquire for her, and sending her milk and nice things from their estate outside Florence. These were real luxuries in those days of the war.

Francesca died January 21, 1917.

Our cousins, the Misses Hallowell, went out to Florence to arrange for a memorial to our Aunt Lucia and Francesca in the Allori Cemetery. They wrote us that Florence seemed sad to them without their mother and the dear Alexanders. We knew that it would seem sad to us, and have never yet felt like going there again.

The last winter that our cousins were in Florence, Francesca recited to them the following verses, and told them that she intended to have them in a second volume of *Hidden Servants*. But that volume was never finished.

THE LEGEND OF THE CHRISTMAS ROSE

When the angels came from Heaven to Earth
To bring the news of our Saviour's birth;
And sounded over the Bethlehem hills,
The hymn whose echo the wide world fills.

When the wondering shepherds heard and
feared,
So great the glory that then appeared,
Beside their fire, with branches piled,
Sat, still and tired, a little child.

All day had she helped the sheep to tend,
And now she was resting at the end.
Warm and contented well was she;
A lamb had nestled against her knee.

And no one gave her a passing thought,
Amid the rapture the night had brought;
Nor dreamed that the words, by angels sung,
Could reach the mind of a child so young.

Yet she, like them had the story heard,
Had listened breathless to every word;
And when the heavenly host had gone,
Their song in her heart went sounding on.

And when the shepherds their journey made,
To the poor low shed where He was laid;
She never thought of the night so keen,
Nor the weary miles that lay between.

But, borne along by a great desire,
 She rose from her warm seat by the fire;
 And out through the still and frosty air
 She followed on, without asking where.

In solemn splendour the moon looked down,
 On field deserted and sleeping town;
 On silver olive and cypress grave,
 On wood that never a whisper gave;

On the snow-topped mountains' distant gleam,
 On the icy glaze of pool and stream.
 And nothing moved in the silence dead,
 Save the little band that forward sped.

But, while they hasted, they did not mind,
 That the child was running on behind;
 They had not seen her, nor heard the sound,
 Of small bare feet on the frozen ground.

And soon would she see her Lord, who lay
 So poor that night on His bed of hay!
 And so the thought had her soul inspired,
 She did not know she was cold or tired.

And now they have found the shed they seek;
 And wait, half fearing to move or speak:
 They knew that behind that humble wall,
 The Infant lay, who was Lord of all.

The child drew nearer, and in the shade,
 She stood concealed while the men delayed:
 And saw, what she had not seen before,
 That each in his hand an offering bore.

Wrapped in his mantle and sheltered warm,
One carried a lamb beneath his arm;
While others had only thought to spare
Some milk, or fruit from their own poor fare:

Or downy fleece that was fine and white;
Whatever came to their hand that night.
And, as they looked on the poor array,
She heard a man to his neighbour say:

“They are but little; yet, none the less,
They may our service and love express.
Tonight, I think it would be a sin,
If one should go empty-handed in.”

Poor child, it fell on her like a blow!
For now she thought that she must not go
And see the Babe who had come from Heaven,
To whom already her heart was given.

A moment, stricken and lost she stands,
And looks at her little empty hands,
For she has nothing on earth at all;
No gift to offer, however small!

She started forward with longing keen.
Could she not see Him, herself unseen?
One look—just one—through the open door;
And then, she would never ask for more.

The shepherds entered; she saw them well,
As silently on their knees they fell.
She saw the shed as it looked within;
A poorer lodging had never been!

The bare stone wall, and the rafters low,
But all with a warm, soft light aglow.
And oxen, gazing with eyes intent,
And a woman's sweet face, downward bent.

But the Babe Divine she had not seen,
For the kneeling shepherds came between.
Now, one was speaking; she thought he told
How angels came while they watched the fold.

And then came words she could hardly hear;
But the gentle tone just reached her ear.
The Mother's welcome, as she supposed:
A man's low voice—and the door was closed.

With lips that quivered, and eyes that shone,
She stood in the moonlit street alone.
Then, fell on the ground in trouble sore.
And wept, as never she wept before.

The shepherds, reverent, went their way;
And none had noticed her where she lay,
On the pavement cold as I have said;
The stones were wet with the tears she shed.

But the stones were broken here and there;
So much of the frozen ground was bare:
And there, wherever a tear-drop fell,
A bud in the earth began to swell!

As though a seed had been taking root,
From every tear grew a pale green shoot,
And soon in wonder she saw them rise,
And grow to beauty beneath her eyes.

There were leaves of dark and glossy green,
 There were rosy buds that hung between;
 And flowers of soft and silvery white,
 Like the moon that shone that wintry night.

Then came a sudden and happy thought,
 That here was the very gift she sought!
 Her heart was lightened, her weeping stilled;
 With bud and blossom her hand she filled:

And then . . . There was neither bolt nor
 bar . . .
 She timidly pushed the door ajar.
 A breath came in of the freezing air;
 The Mother turned. . . . And what saw she
 there?

A little, innocent, wistful face,
 Was looking into that holy place,
 With eyes where the tears were not yet dry;
 While one small hand held the flowers on high.

Then the Mother took her hand, and led
 The happy child to her Infant's bed.
 And who so blessed as that little maid,
 When down on His side her flowers she laid!

And every year at the Christmas time,
 When the bells ring out their midnight chime,
 When summer blossoms lie dry and dead,
 And frost shines white on the garden bed . . .

When the poor on earth are helped and cheered,
 For love of Him who that night appeared,
 In cold and poverty for our sake,
 That we might all of His wealth partake.

When hearts are warm, and when air is chill,
The child's white flowers are blooming still;
And tell the story, through changing years,
Of her who could offer only tears.

“Written for the beloved *Mamma*, by the
one who loves her best, Christmas Day, 1904.”

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